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ABSTRACT

This document reports the Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program (Australia), which monitors student achievement in reading and mathematics in grades 5 and 7 in urban primary schools and grade 5 to post-primary in Aboriginal schools. The aim of the program is to provide teachers with a set of assessment materials and provide information regarding the academic achievement of students at the end of primary schooling. This study focused on the operation of the program in schools and the perceptions of teachers and other personnel involved with the program. Data were collected by a questionnaire-survey of 185 teachers and school visits to 19 urban schools and 10 rural Aboriginal schools. Results of the study indicate the following: (1) many teachers have little understanding or knowledge of the program; (2) some schools have incomplete sets of materials; (3) teachers expressed doubts about the relevance of certain program materials for classroom use; and (4) only about half of all Aboriginal schools participate in the program. In schools where the program has been properly implemented it makes a valuable contribution; therefore, active participation must be ensured for all schools to take advantage of the program's potential. Appendices include procedures for improving test item quality, interview schedules, sample questionnaires for urban and Aboriginal schools, and a sample program evaluation form. (LP)

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REPORT 1/1989

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY PRIMARY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM:

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY INCORPORATING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

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Curriculum and Assessment Branch

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY INCORPORATING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

Northern Territory Department of Education

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For further information please contact:
Superintendent
Evaluation Research & Assessment
Curriculum & Assessment Branch
GPO Box 4821, Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: (089) 89 5611

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Anne Richards
Evaluation, Research and Accreditation Section
Curriculum & Assessment Branch
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FOREWORD

This is an interesting study. Essentially it brings together information from the documentary record of the Primary Assessment Program and samples perceptions of the program by those working in schools. It is not a full-scale evaluation of the program because the data are derived mainly from these two sources and the study has not encompassed other perspectives which would give a more complete picture.

In summary, the results of this study show that in those schools where the program has been properly implemented the program makes a valuable contribution. It also shows a widespread lack of appreciation of the program and the advantages it offers for good teaching. The challenge is obvious. The program makes available to schools high quality and relevant assessment materials and establishes criteria for judging progress. We must ensure that all schools take advantage of its potential.

It should be remembered that teachers and principals have been closely involved with the development of the Primary Assessment Program from its inception. Changes to the program have largely been in response to demands from schools. Considerable efforts have been made to provide in-service and support. In these circumstances, it is difficult to understand the resistance the program sometimes still evokes, particularly as none of the dire predictions, that some made at its beginning, have come about.

All schools are required to participate in the program and I look forward to their doing so, knowledgeably and enthusiastically. We will do what we can by way of in-service and support to ensure staff are aware of what the program offers and I hope all schools will not only take advantage of these opportunities but also see it as a partnership in which they can do much to help themselves. Very considerable resources have gone into this program and some schools are deriving great benefits. These are available to all.

The Primary Assessment Program, particularly for urban schools, is reaching maturity. The fears that accompanied its birth have not been realised. Prejudice against it has no real foundation. Under adverse circumstances it has proven itself and the time is ripe for its full advantages to be exploited by all.

Dr C H Payne
Director
Curriculum & Assessment Branch

CONTENTS

FOREWORD iii

LISTS OF TABLES AND GRAPHS vii

LIST OF APPENDICES viii

CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reason for the Evaluation 1

1.2 What is the Primary Assessment Program? 2

1.3 Origins and Implementation of the Program 2

CHAPTER 2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives of the Study 4

2.2 Data Collection 4

2.3 Data Presentation and Analysis 7

CHAPTER 3.0 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM AND ITS OPERATION

3.1 Aims of the Program 8

3.2 Developing the Item Pools 9

3.3 Materials and Support Documents 10

3.4 Introducing the Program to Schools 16

3.5 Implementing and Reporting on the Program - 1984 - 1989 17

3.6 Feedback and Evolution 24

CHAPTER 4.0 PROGRAM OUTCOMES

4.1 Introduction 25

4.2 Awareness and Use of Materials by Teachers 25

4.3 Materials - Their Place in Schools 37

4.4 Teachers' Views on the Strengths and Weaknesses of Materials 38

4.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program: Views of Senior Staff 42

4.6 Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Program as a Whole 43

4.7 Teachers' Views on Test Administration and Timing of Tests 46

4.8 How Teachers Learn About The Program 50

4.9 Achievement of Program Aims: Views of Senior Staff in Schools 51

4.10 Improving Academic Standards 54

4.11 Use Made of Information by Schools 55

4.12 Use Made of Information by the Department 57

4.13 The Year 7 Mathematics Test 1988 58

CHAPTER 5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

5.1 Introduction 61

5.2 Summary of Findings 61

5.3 Conclusions 65

5.4 Issues 66

REFERENCES 69

APPENDICES 72

LIST OF TABLES AND GRAPHS

Table 1 Urban Seniors' Awareness and Use of Materials

Graph 1 Urban Seniors' Awareness and Use of Materials

Table 2 Urban Teachers' Awareness and Use of Materials

Graph 2 Urban Teachers' Awareness and Use of Materials

Table 3 Awareness and Use of Materials - Aboriginal Schools

Graph 3 Awareness and Use of Materials - Aboriginal Schools

Table 4 Strengths and Weaknesses of Item Pools

Table 5 Strengths and Weaknesses of Writing Moderation

Table 6 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Type C Document

Table 7 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program

Table 8 Attitudes Towards the Program as a Whole

Table 9 Timing of the Tests

Table 10 Finding Out About the Program

Table 11 Achievement of Aim 1

Table 12 Achievement of Aim 2

Table 13 Improving Standards

Table 14 Awareness of Results

Table 15 Awareness of Reports

Table 16 Reactions to the Year 7 Mathematics Test 1988

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix I Procedures for Improving Item Quality

Appendix II Adapted Levels of Use Interview for School Staff

Appendix III Questionnaire for Principals/Assistant Principals and Senior Teachers

Appendix IV Questionnaire for Teachers of Upper Primary Classes - Year 5, 6 and 7

Appendix V Questionnaire for Principals/Assistant Principals in Aboriginal Schools

Appendix VI Questionnaire for Teachers of Upper Primary and Post Primary Classes

Appendix VII Evaluation of the Primary Assessment Program 1988 Year 7 Mathematics Test

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reason for the Evaluation

Improving academic standards is a long standing concern of educationists and can be a catalyst for changes in educational practice. One of the methods of addressing this concern in the Northern Territory was the introduction of Core Curricula into schools in 1981. Results of NT students in the 1980 Australian Studies in Student Performance Project tests (Wee, 1982) provided impetus for a system-wide assessment of core objectives. A working party was set up in 1982 to develop procedures for assessing student performance at the primary school level. This resulted in the Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program which was introduced into urban schools in 1984 and Aboriginal schools in 1986.

This study of the Primary Assessment Program originated from a motion passed by the Board of Studies in 1987 *"That the NT Principals Association be requested to survey its members as to the value they perceived in the Primary Assessment Program"* (Minutes of the Board of Studies meeting 87/4). Subsequently, as a preferred strategy, the Evaluation, Research and Accreditation Section of the Curriculum and Assessment Branch was asked to carry out the study. As the assessment program affects a wider audience than principals, the study was extended to include the views of teachers and other Departmental personnel involved with the program.

In accordance with the original request from the Board of Studies the emphasis has been upon the way the program has been received and implemented in schools. Thus it is not a full-scale evaluation of the program. For example, the study did not extend to any in-depth or expert appraisal of the intrinsic merit of the materials or test items. The test items have, however, been subjected to statistical checks for validity and reliability as part of the ongoing development of the program (Appendix I. Procedures for Improving Item Quality. Wee, 1986, pp. 4 - 6).

This report summarises the findings of the study carried out during 1988/89. It focuses mainly on the operation of the program in schools and relies primarily on the perceptions and opinions of school staff for the main body of information.

1.2 What is the Primary Assessment Program?

The NT Primary Assessment Program is an assessment package employed in the Northern Territory to assess competencies in Mathematics and English of children in Years 5 and 7 in urban primary schools and Year 5 to post-primary in Aboriginal schools.

The main aims of the Primary Assessment Program are; to provide teachers in schools with a set of assessment materials, and to provide the Department (and the community) with information regarding the academic standards of pupils at the end of primary schooling. To this end the program has two facets:

(a) A set of assessment materials based on the Mathematics and English curricula which have been sent to schools for teachers to use in assessing a range of knowledge and skills in these subjects.

b) Sets of tests, based on the assessment materials, that are administered to pupils in Year 5 and Year 7 in urban schools and Year 5 to post-primary in Aboriginal schools at the end of each year, with results forwarded to the Department to provide system-wide data on academic standards across the Territory and class results for schools.

A more detailed description of the Primary Assessment Program is provided in Chapter 3.

1.3 Origins and Implementation of the Program

In the early 1980's there were widespread moves throughout Australia for greater accountability in Education and increased recognition of the need for evaluation and assessment. This was reflected in a comment made by the then chairman of the Northern Territory Curriculum Advisory Committee:

> *....Increasingly the State systems will be held responsible for educational outcomes by parents, students, employers and Federal and State politicians....Of one thing I am firmly convinced. We in education today must be willing to evaluate and assess what we are doing, and be guided by the results. If we do not; someone else will do it for us (Chariman's Report, Curriculum Advisory Committee - Meeting 81/2, 1981).*

The following statement from the paper "Enhancing Standards in Northern Territory Primary Schools" (1988) captures the circumstances surrounding the origins of the Primary Assessment Program:

> *A public debate on standards was triggered in 1982 by a Ministerial statement on systemwide testing which followed the release of the results of Northern Territory students in the Australian Studies in Student Performance Project (ASSP).... A working party was set up in November 1982 by the then Minister of Education to formulate a proposal for a primary assessment program (Huang, 1987, p. 1).*

Work on the development of materials began in 1983 with the first set of materials being sent to urban schools at the beginning of 1984. A series of inservice workshops were held to explain the program. Tests taken from the materials were administered to students at the end of the year and the first report on the results was published in 1985.

In 1986, materials developed for Aboriginal schools were sent to schools along with instructions for their use. In September of that year schools were asked to administer specified tests from the materials and send results to the Department. The first report on the results from Aboriginal schools was published in 1987.

Since 1986 additional assessment materials have been developed and sent to schools. All Aboriginal and urban schools are expected to administer tests annually.

Major reports and summary reports based on test results are written each year. These reports are presented to the Board of Studies and if endorsed then go to the Minister for Education through the Secretary. The summary reports are then released to the general public when this process is complete.

2 0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives of the Study

As a guide for the study the following objectives were formulated:

(i) report how the program operates at school and Departmental level;

(ii) gauge teacher awareness and use of materials;

(iii) gauge teacher attitudes towards the program;

(iv) determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program as perceived by personnel involved;

(v) describe materials and reports;

(vi) report the development and implementation of the program including any changes; and

(vii) report the use made of information gained from the testing program.

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Overview

To study as many aspects of the program as possible, a wide range of data was required. Activities included: searching literature to provide an historical perspective on the Northern Territory program; examining materials, test results and reports; surveying opinion by questionnaire and interview; and observing the operation of the program at school and Departmental levels.

2.2.2 Structured Interview

The interview schedule developed for measuring levels of use of an innovation (Loucks, Newlove & Hall, 1975) was adapted and employed. This schedule gauges the participants' awareness and use of an innovation. Additional topics based directly on the Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program were included. After trialling in four urban and two Aboriginal schools the interview

schedule was revised to allow more flexibility to cater for the range of familiarity participants had with materials and their experience with the program (Appendix II).

2.2.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires, based on the objectives of the study were developed for:

(a) principals and senior teachers in urban primary schools (Appendix III);

(b) teachers of Years 5, 6, and 7 in urban primary schools (Appendix IV);

(c) principals/assistant principals and teachers in charge of Aboriginal schools (Appendix V);

(d) teachers of upper primary and post-primary classes in Aboriginal schools (Appendix VI).

The questionnaires and interview schedules were trialled in four urban schools and two Aboriginal schools. In the trials these instruments were administered personally by the evaluator, and teachers' comments on the questions, format, etc., noted.

Because a new style of Mathematics test, based on the Board Approved Curriculum, was developed for Year 7 in 1988, an additional questionnaire in the form of a one page feedback sheet was developed in November of that year. This questionnaire was aimed at providing information on teachers' opinions as to the time allowed for students to complete the test, the date of the test, the range and difficulty of items and the test format (Appendix VII).

2.2.4 Document and Materials Search

Historical and current documents related to the program were studied. This included examining files, reports and relevant letters and circulars.

Assessment materials developed for the program were examined and a brief description made of each. Some discussion was held with materials developers and changes that had been made to materials and the testing program were noted.

Annual reports on test results were studied and a summary made of

how the program operated each year with a brief outline of the general findings on academic attainment for the groups tested.

2.2.5 Respondents and Informants

Questionnaires, for the four groups identified in 2.2.3, were sent to 66 urban primary schools and 77 Aboriginal schools in June 1988. For the larger urban schools where there was a possibility of more than one teacher for each of the grades 5, 6, and 7 two questionnaires were sent for each year level and two questionnaires for principals and/or seniors to complete. For the smaller schools one questionnaire was sent for each of the year levels and two questionnaires for the principals and/or senior teachers. Because of a low return rate, additional questionnaires were sent to schools in September, with a letter thanking those who had contributed and requesting completion and return of questionnaires by those schools that had not participated earlier in the year.

The questionnaire on the new Year 7 Mathematics test was sent to 66 urban primary schools in November 1988. In January 1989 a copy of this questionnaire was sent to schools that had not returned the questionnaire and a note of appreciation sent to those schools that had participated.

Interviewees included teachers, principals and assistant principals in schools and a number of Departmental personnel from all regions of the Territory. Visits were made to a total of 19 urban primary schools in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs. There are 66 urban primary schools in the Northern Territory i.e. 29% of primary schools were visited. Visits were made to 10 of the 77 Aboriginal schools located throughout the Territory. (13% of Aboriginal schools were visited). The interviews were conducted April to October 1988. Discussions were held with a total of 15 Departmental personnel (other than school staff) and some of the people who had worked on the development of materials.

2.2.6 Response Rates

Completed questionnaires were received from:

38 principals/senior staff in urban schools (representing 57% of the 66 schools);

52 teachers of Year 5, 6 and 7 in urban schools;

52 staff in Aboriginal schools (37% of the 77 schools);

43 schools involved with the 1988 Year 7 Mathematics Test (65% of the 66 schools).

Note: It was difficult to determine the response rate for questionnaires from teachers of Years 5, 6, and 7 as many teachers reported teaching multi-grade classes and in one case a questionnaire had been completed at a meeting of teachers of Years 5, 6 and 7 and this was forwarded as a group response to the questionnaire. Information from this questionnaire was not included in the analysis.

2.3 Data Presentation and Analysis

Chapter 3 is principally concerned with presenting information obtained from literatures searches, Departmental records and program documentation.

The information presented in Chapter 4 comes mainly from the questionnaires and from interviews with principals, assistant principals and teachers in schools. Additional information was obtained through visits to schools and in discussions with Departmental personnel. It must be noted that the information presented is based mainly on the perceptions of school staff on the program.

3.0 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM AND ITS OPERATION

3.1 Aims of the Program

Since the first introduction of the Primary Assessment Program, the aims have subsequently been revised or reinterpreted in various documents relating to the program.

The original aims as defined by the working party set up in 1982 were:

> *(i) To assess student achievement in the essential skills and understandings identified in the English and Mathematics core curricula.*
>
> *(ii) To identify broad areas of strength and weakness in student performance in the core components in order that remedial provisions for student deficiencies can be made at both the school and system levels.*
>
> *(iii) To provide guidance and assistance to teachers in the assessment of student performance in the total curriculum.*
>
> *(iv) To provide a basis for curriculum development and evaluation (Working Party 1983).*

Additional statements on the aims include:

> *From the beginning the main thrust of this program has been to assist and improve instruction in the core curriculum in reading and mathematics. A second important feature of this program is the monitoring of standards of achievement in the basic skills of reading and mathematics (Wee, 1986 Foreword).*
>
> *Essentially the program had two aims: to provide a diagnostic tool for teachers, schools and the system so that strengths could be capitalized upon and attention given to areas of weakness, and to allow overall assessment of progress (Payne, 1988).*

It appears that the two main aims of the program that have evolved are:

the provision of quality assessment materials for teachers in the upper primary school to use; and

the monitoring of student performance in Mathematics and English at the upper primary school level.

This study considers the achievement of these two aims, and in particular the views of school staff in regard to them.

3.2 Developing the Item Pools

The testing program was aimed at assessing student performance on the Mathematics and English core curricula. To this end, the Mathematics and English item pools were developed. These consisted of criterion-referenced tests covering the core objectives for Year 5 and Year 7 levels. Tests were developed by panels involving teachers, Departmental officers and two teachers seconded full time to the then Educational Services Branch for the project. Work began on the item pools for urban schools in April 1983.

For the original item pools the multiple choice format was chosen. Reasons for this choice were:

(i) the tests are easy to mark;

(ii) the use of plausible alternatives makes the result amenable to diagnosis, i.e. the alternatives are generated from common errors made by students;

(iii) it is relatively free from response sets, i.e. students generally do not have a tendency to favour a particular alternative when they do not know the answer.

(iv) it is both efficient and economical, i.e. a number of areas can be tested within a short time (Wee, 1985, p. 10).

The items were field trialled and results analysed to provide information on measurement characteristics such as the difficulty levels, discrimination indices and reliability (Wee, 1985, p.13).

From 1984 to 1987 all urban primary schools were instructed to use

selected tests from the item pool, photocopy the required number and administer these at the end of each year. A sampling matrix was employed for collection of test data, i.e. rotating sets of tests that each school uses. The same process occurred with Aboriginal schools in 1986 and 1987. This process changed in 1988 whereby originals of the tests were sent to schools, rather than schools selecting from the item pools. Some of these tests were taken from the item pools, in addition to new tests being developed. The exact changes to the testing program are explained in 3.5.

3.3 Materials and Support Documents

The Primary Assessment Program materials comprise a package covering three assessment approaches, namely Type A: item pools; Type B: moderation of student's writing; and Type C: strategies for assessing reading.

The item pools are collections of criterion-referenced items which have been trialled and calibrated so that their measurement properties are known.

The moderation booklets contain annotated samples of children's writings which have been judged on a criterion-referenced framework. This framework which includes the criteria for judging student's writing is described in the booklets.

"Strategies for Assessing Reading" contains assessment devices and suggested activities e.g. observation schedules, checklists and practical tasks, which teachers can use to evaluate student performance on tasks not assessed by pen and paper tests.

Ten major documents have been developed so far for the program:

1 NT Children's Writing Years 5 and 7, Moderated Samples, 1983.

2 Children's Writing in the Northern Territory, Moderated Examples of Reports and Narratives from Students in Years 5 and 7, 1988.

3 Phase 2 Northern Territory Primary Mathematics Item Pool 1983.

4 Phase 3 Northern Territory Primary Mathematics Item Pool, 1983.

5 Stage 5 Northern Territory Primary Reading Item Pool, 1983.

6 Stage 7 Northern Territory Primary Reading Item Pool, 1983.

7 Type C. Some Strategies for Reading Assessment, 1986.

8 Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program for Aboriginal Schools. Mathematics Item Pools, Phase 2, 1986.

9 Stage 5 Reading Item Pool, (for Aboriginal schools) 1986.

10 Aboriginal Children's Writing Years 5 and 7, Moderated Samples, 1985.

The booklet "Children's Writing in the Northern Territory. Moderated Examples of Reports and Narratives from Children in Aboriginal Schools" (1988), is in the process of being printed and will be sent to schools in 1989.

Each document is self contained with guidelines and instructions for administration. They also contain introductory information describing the assessment program, its development and reasons for its use. Documents 1 - 7 have been sent to urban primary schools and documents 7 - 10 have been sent to Aboriginal schools. (Note: "Type C Strategies for Reading Assessment" was sent to both Aboriginal and urban schools).

In addition to the above materials a set of approximately 250 Mathematics test items, classified into the areas of space, measurement, number, number relations, and graphs and statistics, were issued to schools at the end of 1988. These test items were similar to those developed for the Year 7 Mathematics test administered in 1988.

The following is a brief description of the contents of each of the documents.

1 NT Children's Writing Years 5 and 7, Moderated Samples, 1983

This booklet contains a collection of moderated examples of students' writing from urban schools in the Territory. A framework for assessing written expression is provided along with a checklist for teachers to use.

Development of this assessment package involved obtaining teacher-

rated examples of student writing on three set topics. Using the same rating framework as used by the teachers the samples were marked by a moderating committee. As teacher ratings and the ratings of the moderating committee were consistent in gradings, this can be considered to be a reliable instrument for assessment.

2 Children's Writing in the Northern Territory.Moderated Examples of Reports and Narratives from Students in Years 5 and 7. 1988

This booklet contains a selection of moderated samples of report and narrative writing of Year 5 and Year 7 students from urban schools and is designed for teachers to use as a guide for assessing student writing. Frameworks and checklists for assessing factual report writing and narrative writing, along with descriptions of the different genres, are provided.

3 Phase 2 Northern Territory Primary Mathematics Item Pool 1983

Tests in this package are based on core curriculum objectives at the Phase 2 (Year 4/5 level) for urban schools. Most of the items are in the multiple choice format. Answer sheets and examples of how to mark the tests are included.

Contents:

Core Goals/Objective	Item Pool Code	No. of Tests
2-D Shapes	S-A	1
Measurement	M-O	3
Length	M-A	1
Area	M-B	3
Mass	M-C	1
Time	M-D	8
Addition and Subtraction (Written)	N-C	4
Multiplication and Division (Mental)	N-D	4
Multiplication and Division (Written)	N-E	4
Relations and Number Systems	N-E	12
Chance and Statistics	N-F	2

4 Phase 3 Northern Territory Primary Mathematics Item Pool, 1983

Tests in this package are based on the Phase 3 core curriculum (Year 6/7 level) for urban primary schools. Most of the items are presented in the multiple-choice format. Answer sheet and example of marked tests are included.

Contents:

Core Goals/Objective	Item Pool Code	No. of Tests
3-D Shapes	S-A	1
2-D Shapes	S-B	8
Position and Movement	S-C	5
Paths	S-D	2
Measurement	M-O	4
Length	M-A	7
Area	M-B	2
Volume and Capacity	M-C	2
Mass	M-D	4
Time	M-E	6
Addition and Subtraction (Mental)	N-A	20
Addition and Subtraction (Written)	N-B	11
Multiplication and Division (Written)	N-D	8
Relations and Number System	N-E	13
Chance and Statistics	N-F	7

5 Stage 5 Northern Territory Primary Reading Item Pool, 1983

These assessment materials which include; multiple choice comprehension tests, dictionary skills items, exercises in reading recipes, maps, TV programs, advertisements etc. are based on the Stage 5 English curriculum for urban schools. For each test, there is a set of materials for the teacher and for the student. Answer keys and student profile sheets are included for record keeping.

Contents:

Comprehension passages and questions	C1-C7
Dictionary Skills	D1-D2
Reading for Different Purposes	R1-R13

6 Stage 7 Northern Territory Primary Reading Item Pool,1983

These assessment materials which include; multiple choice comprehension tests, dictionary skills items, exercises in reading recipes, maps, TV programs, advertisements etc., and cloze exercises, are based on the Stage 7 English curriculum. Examples of test marking and interpretation of test scores in terms of mastery are included.

Contents:

Comprehension passages	C1-C9
Dictionary Skills	D1-D4
Reading for Different Purposes	R1-R11

7 Type C Some Strategies for Reading Assessment 1986

Each Type 'C' objective or group of related objectives for Stage 5 and Stage 7 is listed with accompanying practical tasks and activities for students. Where applicable, the appropriate strategies for teachers to use in administering these activities are included.

Contents:

The first section of this document contains 29 tasks and activities based on the Year 5 and 7 reading core objectives. The suggested activities teach and assess mastery levels in areas such as; reading for meaning, reading over and increasing time span, using a dictionary, using a Junior Thesaurus, using and understanding a library.

The second section, which is based on Stage 7 only, provides materials and suggested activities for teaching and assessing such skills as summarising a piece of work, recognising an authors' viewpoint etc. There are 10 units in this section.

8 Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program for Aboriginal Schools. Mathematics Item Pool. Phase 2. 1986

Tests in this package are based on core curriculum objectives at the Phase 2 level for Aboriginal schools. The package contains tests of core content and skills. The tests are cross-referenced where they measure the same objective. Most of the test items are in the multiple choice format. Answer sheets and examples of how to mark

the tests are included, along with student profile sheets for recording progress.

Contents:

Core Goals/Objective	Item Pool Code	No. of Tests
2-D Shapes	S-A	3
Measurement	M-O	3
Length	M-A	1
Area	M-B	3
Time	M-C	8
Subtraction (Mental)	N-A	7
Addition (Written)	N-B	4
Multiplication (Mental)	N-C	4
Multiplication (Written)	N-D	5
Relations and Number System	N-E	10
Chance and Statistics	N-F	2

9 Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program for Aboriginal Schools Stage 5 Reading Item Pool

These assessment materials which include; multiple choice comprehension tests, dictionary skills items, exercises in reading recipes, maps, indexes, advertisements etc., and cloze exercises, are based on the Stage 5 English core curriculum for Aboriginal schools. In the development of materials effort was made to reduce culture-bias. Answer keys and student profile sheets are included for record keeping.

Revision of the comprehension passages and questions was done in 1988. The revised materials were sent to schools for administration in the annual testing program.

Contents:

Comprehension passages and questions	C1-C11
Dictionary Skills	D1-D3
Reading for Different Purposes	R1-R16
Cloze	CL1-CL8

10 NT Aboriginal Children's Writing Stage 5. Moderated English Samples 1985

This booklet contains moderated samples of Aboriginal children's writing and is designed for teachers to use as a guide for teaching and assessing writing. The samples have been categorized into low, medium and high competency at the Stage 5 level for Aboriginal schools.

A framework for assessing written expression at the Stage 5 level and a checklist for teacher use are included.

Children's Writing in the Northern Territory. Moderated Examples of Reports and Narratives from Children in Aboriginal Schools. 1989 (in press)

This booklet contains a selection of moderated samples of report and narrative writing of Aboriginal children from Year 5 to post primary and is designed for teachers to use as a guide for assessing student writing. Frameworks and checklists for assessing factual report writing and narrative writing, along with descriptions of the different genres, are provided.

All of these documents have been sent to appropriate schools, along with instructions for their use. Support documents have included letters and circulars from the Curriculum and Assessment Branch and the Board of Studies.

3.4 Introducing the Program to Schools

In March 1983 every Darwin primary school principal was invited to an inservice where the objectives and methodology of the Primary Assessment Program were explained. This was followed up by a half day seminar involving principals, assistant principals, a representative from the Northern Territory Teachers Federation (NTTF), and all Darwin based regional superintendents. Similar seminars were held in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

There was regular consultation with groups such as the Council of Government Schools Organization (COGSO), NTTF, The Primary Principals Association, and the Mathematics and English Subject Areas Committees. Such bodies received monthly statements on the developments of the program.

In March 1984 inservice workshops were held for principals and

assistant principals of all urban primary schools. In September 1984 urban primary schools were directed to administer specified tests from the item pools which were now in place in the schools and send the results to the Department for analysis. In 1984 every primary school was to administer all of the specified tests. All but three schools took part in the exercise. Those schools not taking part were directed to submit an alternative testing program for their Year 5 and Year 7 classes. Only one school made a submission for an alternative program and this was rejected by the Department on various grounds but chiefly because the Mathematics program was not relevant to the NT core objectives for Years 5 and 7.

At the beginning of 1986 materials were sent to Aboriginal schools. Comprehensive descriptions and instructions for the use of these materials were included, but there was no inservice as happened with the urban program. Some teachers had a knowledge of the materials as they had been on item writing panels or had been involved with trialling the materials.

In the ensuing years, additional assessment materials were developed and sent to schools. These included: the Type C package "Some Strategies for Reading Assessment" (1986 for Aboriginal and urban schools); and "Children's Writing in the Northern Territory - Moderated Examples of Reports and Narratives from Students in Years 5 and 7" (1988).

3.5 Implementing and Reporting on the Program: 1984 to 1989

The testing program was designed to monitor academic standards of Year 5 and Year 7 students in urban schools and Year 5 to post-primary students in Aboriginal schools. Tests have been administered annually with student answer sheets being returned to the Department for marking, analysis and reporting.

1984 Urban Schools. All urban primary schools were directed to administer a selected battery of tests to students in Year 5 and Year 7. Year 5 students could be excluded from the tests if the school deemed them to be working below the core curricula levels of Stage 5 in English and Phase 2 in Mathematics. All Year 7 students, defined as "children who are judged by the school to be in their final year of primary school" were to sit the tests (Wee, 1985, p. 15).

The 1984 testing program included; 48 Phase 3 (Year 7) Mathematics tests, 36 Phase 2 (Year 5) Mathematics tests, 27 Stage

7 English reading tests and 22 Stage 5 English reading tests .

A method of stratified sampling was employed for test administration whereby schools were assigned to four groups, each group comprising large, medium and small schools based on total enrolment. Tests were randomly selected from the item pools and then randomly assigned to each of the four groups of schools. Directions were sent to schools listing the tests that they were to take from the item pools, photocopy and administer. "No standard administration procedures were provided to teachers as the administration of these tests was seen as part of the normal instructional process. No time limits were specified: teachers were asked to use their own judgement in deciding whether enough time had been given" (Wee, 1985, p. 19). When all tests were administered schools were required to return students' answer sheets to the Department. Information from each school was kept confidential by a system of coding with only the project co-ordinator having access to school codes and student numbers.

Forty nine urban schools were identified for participation in the program, excluding Alice Springs and Katherine Schools of the Air. Three schools did not take part in the testing program in 1984.

The first 'Report on the Performance of students in the Assessment Program for Urban Primary Schools in the Northern Territory: 1984'. was published in 1985. This comprehensive report gave full descriptions of criterion-referenced testing, the development of the item pools, how the data was collected and a detailed analysis of results.

Results were reported for each test in the form of the percentage of Territory students at each year obtaining 60%, 70%, 80%, 90% and 100% correct. A copy of the major report and summary report was sent to all primary schools. (See Appendix VIII 1984 Results. Wee, 1985, pp. 77 - 83, 101 - 104, 118 - 120).

General comments on the outcomes of the tests were that both Year 5 and Year 7 students were achieving reasonably well, on core objectives, in reading comprehension, did poorly in dictionary skills and performed satisfactorily in reading for different purposes (Wee, 1985, pp. 116 - 117).

In Mathematics at the Phase 3 level students performed well at: the four operations involving whole numbers; addition and subtraction of fractions with like denominators; selecting correct units/symbols for mass, length and volume; relations between 1 mL and 1 L, 1 g and

1 kg; and solving word problems involving the four operations. Students performed poorly in the areas of: measurement of angles; unit conversions in length and mass; finding intervals between two given times; identifying place values; and interpreting bar and line graphs (Wee, 1985, pp. 26, 27).

At the Phase 2 level in Mathematics Year 5 students performed well in; the four operations involving whole numbers and decimals, reading a calendar, identifying place values, showing order relations between numbers, and reading bar graphs. They did not do well in; comparing areas, reading time on a clockface, and rounding numbers (Wee, 1985, pp. 61, 62).

A summary report was produced from the 1984 data. This report contains abbreviated information on the results and general comments on the performance at the two year levels on the sets of tests. The report indicates that the performance of students on the core objectives in Mathematics and English reading was generally satisfactory. The results indicate that most students were competent in most of the core objectives (Wee, 1985).

1985 Urban Schools. The method of matrix sampling and rotating the tests between the four groups (as determined in 1984) was employed. The same tests as used in the 1984 program were to be used and a list was sent to each school detailing the tests they were to administer for that year. Fifty one schools were identified for inclusion in the testing program.

The 'Report on Student Performance in the Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program for Urban Schools: 1985' was written in 1986 when the results had been analysed. As with the 1984 report, tables of results at the different cutoff levels were included, along with discussion of performance on selected objectives. An additional feature was the comparison of the 1984 and 1985 results.

Results indicated that in 1985 the majority of students in Years 5 and 7 were competent in most areas of the core curriculum in Mathematics. "Most students in Year 7 did not appear to have a problem in the four operations and could apply these in solving very simple word problems. But quite a high proportion seem to have difficulty in relations such as the conversion of units in which decimals are involved." Most of the year 5 students were successful in most areas of the core with the exception of some aspects of subtraction and division. "Analysis of the results in Reading show that most students in both Years 5 and 7 were competent in the

skills required to locate information from a telephone directory, follow directions on recipes, interpret information from various sources such as a street map, a concert program, TV program or use library reference skills However, in the areas of comprehension of selected passages and dictionary skills, performance was somewhat poorer" (Wee, 1986, p. 103).

Comparison of the 1984 and 1985 results indicated improvement in some Mathematics areas at both the Year 5 and Year 7 level. Results in the reading comprehension involving selected passages showed little change, with results in the dictionary skills tests being poor and showing little change from 1984. Results on tests involving reading for different purposes showed improvement at the Year 7 level and decline for Year 5 (Wee, 1986, pp. 103, 104). The 1985 summary report described the areas of strength and weakness, percentages achieving competence, and comparison between the 1984 and 1985 results.

1986 Urban Schools. The number of tests to be administered by urban schools was reduced significantly. The reason for this change was due to feedback from schools which indicated the testing program was a "heavy burden on resources in terms of time and cost of photocopying test material" (Wee, 1987, p. 28). The 'Report on Student Performance in the Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program for Urban Schools: 1986' describes student results on 28 Phase 3 Mathematics tests, 33 Phase 2 tests, 20 Stage 7 English reading tests, and 17 Stage 5 reading tests. Tests for the 1986 program were selected on the basis of their value to students for future learning and whether they had sound statistical characteristics as indicated from previous years of administration. As with previous years, results showed areas of strength and weakness in the two subjects.

Comparisons were made between 1985 and 1986 on those tests that were common to both years. There was little evidence to indicate improvement or decline in performance (Wee, 1987).

1986 Aboriginal Schools. 1986 was the first year of the testing program for Aboriginal schools. The assessment materials for Aboriginal schools i.e. the English and Mathematics item pools, the Type C document and the first writing moderation booklet for Aboriginal schools, were sent at the beginning of 1986. All Aboriginal schools including Yirara and Kormilda colleges were included in the program. Schools were assigned to two groups using random stratified sampling. A total of 17 Mathematics tests and 10 reading tests were randomly assigned to each group of schools i.e.

each school had to administer 8 or 9 Mathematics tests and 5 reading tests. In September a letter was sent to schools directing them to select, photocopy and administer specified tests from the item pools and return students' answer sheets to the Department. The same set of tests was to be administered to students from Year 5 to post-primary who the school considered were working at the Stage 5 level in English and Phase 2 in Mathematics as specified in core curricula for Aboriginal schools. "A set of guidelines was provided to teachers to ensure some uniformity in test administration....Teachers explained how students should write their answers for multiple-choice and open-ended items. Students were not allowed to talk with each other during the test and teachers were not to help students answer any test questions." No time limit was specified (Huang, 1987, p. 12).

At least thirty schools did not administer the tests. It appears this was due to union bans and the fact that schools felt they did not have students working at the specified levels necessary for attempting the tests. "From figures supplied by schools that sent in their returns, about 400 students from Year 5 to post-primary were not tested because they were not working at the level of the core and in their teachers' opinion would not have been able to cope with the tests (Huang, 1987, p. 17).

Results indicated serious weaknesses in both Mathematics and English reading. In the majority of the tests 60% of students did not reach the competence scores of 70% in English and 80% in Mathematics. (See Appendix XI for summaries of results)

Reports were distributed to schools and Departmental personnel with a request from the Secretary of Education for action for improvement:

> *Although many students did not take the tests, the report must create a great deal of concern regarding the poor achievement levels shown by students in Aboriginal schools. It is obvious that there is an urgent need to develop strategies for overcoming weaknesses identified in the report. All schools, head office staff and the various interest groups which receive the report need to address the problems that have been revealed (Huang, 1987, Foreword).*

1987 Aboriginal Schools. The same 17 Mathematics tests and 10 English tests were rotated between the two groups of Aboriginal schools and administered to students from Year 5 to post-primary at

the end of the year. "Less than a quarter of the target population of around 2 500 students took the tests. Only a third of the total number of schools sent in their students' answer sheets for data analysis" (Huang, 1988, p. 13).

The reason for the low participation rate is believed to be bans on the testing program by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation and the fact that many students were not operating at the required 'core' levels.

Results in both Mathematics and English were very poor, showing a decline in performance from the previous year (Huang,1987, p. 13).

1987 Urban Schools. The number of tests were slightly reduced for the urban testing program and it was decided to eliminate the dictionary skills tests as it was felt that these skills were better tested at the classroom level in a more practical way. Twenty seven Phase 3 Mathematics tests, 34 Phase 2 Mathematics tests, 16 Stage 7 reading tests, and 15 Stage 5 reading tests were randomly assigned to the four groups of schools i.e. each school administered approximately one quarter of the number of tests. Fifty three schools were identified for inclusion in the program and were instructed to select and photocopy the tests and administer them during the last semester. Most of the urban schools took part in the program.

The results were satisfactory, with most children achieving mastery in both the Mathematics and English tests. Comparison with previous year's results was made on common tests from the previous administrations. Because the areas for comparison were limited to some topics in Mathematic and to specific areas in reading i.e. reading comprehension of passages and reading for different purposes, readers were cautioned against making statements about decline or improvement in overall standards in these subjects (Huang, 1988, pp. 23 -27, 30 -33).

1987 Urban and Aboriginal Schools. For the first time, each school (Aboriginal and urban) received a computer printout of its individual results, along with the Territory results for 1987. These were sent to schools in March 1988. Individual schools received only their own school's results. The project co-ordinator is the only person with knowledge of all school results as there is strict security to keep these confidential.

1988 Urban Schools. In 1988 there were some major changes to the testing program for urban schools. The Phase 3 Mathematics

tests were replaced with a 60-item Mathematics test based on the Board Approved Curriculum for Year 7. Multiple copies were sent to schools for administration on the 19th October 1988 with a time limit of 75 minutes. All of the English comprehension tests were revised. Schools were required to administer only two reading comprehension tests, one reading for different purposes test and a commercial TORCH (Test of Reading Comprehension) test. The sampling matrix was employed for administration of the Stage 7 English tests. Selected originals of the test material were sent to schools for photocopying. Multiple copies of the TORCH test were sent to all schools for administration. Schools were asked to mark the TORCH test and return the students' answer sheets to the Department i.e. for this test only the teachers' marking was accepted as correct and results were fed into the computer for analysis. Marking of this test within the Department was thought to be too time consuming. From the limited number of visits to schools during or after administration of this test, discussions with teachers indicated that they thought this was a good test of reading comprehension.

The testing program for Year 5 urban schools was similar to the 1987 program, however the selected originals were sent to schools for them to photocopy. This eliminated the need for schools to find the selected tests in the item pools.

1988 Aboriginal Schools. The program for Aboriginal schools was also altered in 1988. All of the comprehension tests were completely revised and selected originals sent to schools for them to photocopy. A 65-item Mathematics test was constructed from the Phase 2 Mathematics item pool for Aboriginal schools and multiple copies were sent to schools for administration. Again this eliminated the need for schools to select the tests from the item pools and reduced the amount of photocopying that needed to be done by schools.

Results were analysed and sent to urban schools in March and Aboriginal schools in April 1989.

1989. The proposed 1989 program will include fewer tests than in previous years. The urban program will include: for Year 5, one reading comprehension test and one TORCH and one reading for different purposes test and one summative Mathematics test. For Year 7 there will be one reading comprehension test, one reading for different purposes test, one TORCH test and a new summative Mathematics test.

The Aboriginal program will include one reading comprehension test, one reading for different purposes test and a summative Mathematics test based on the core curriculum.

3.6 Feedback and Evolution

The program has undergone continual change and development. This has been due to ongoing review by the Board of Studies through its Primary Assessment Committee which meets at least four times each year. The direction of the changes has also been influenced by indirect input from schools through subject advisers, regional superintendents and such bodies as the NT Principals Association.

Because the program is open to review, this study itself has already influenced changes in the operation of the program during 1988 and 1989 e.g. the call for inservice was partially attended to by the running of inservice courses in Alice Springs and Darwin in 1989. In addition to this, changes to the 1989 testing program were influenced to an extent by findings of this study.

It must be noted that some of the comments by teachers on subjects such as the Phase 3 urban Mathematics item pool being too simple for Year 7 have already been covered by the introduction of a Year 7 test based on the Board Approved Curriculum. This evaluation was extended to incorporate some of these changes e.g. the survey of teacher opinion on the 1988 Year 7 Mathematics test.

4.0 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

The major findings of the study, obtained from the questionnaire survey, the interviews and the school visits are presented in this chapter. In the main, the findings represent the responses and views of practising teachers and hence provide a school-based perspective upon the program, its operations and its associated materials. Such a perspective is clearly of critical importance to decision makers responsible for the future of the program. Neverless, in interpreting any of the findings, for example those relating to the achievement of objectives, it is clearly necessary to recognise that teachers form only one stakeholder group and that the views of others might well be different. It must also be recognised that the perceptions reported here may well have been influenced by the philosophical and idealogical reservations concerning system-wide testing which have been expressed at various times by representatives of teacher organisations.

Data from school staff are presented in three main categories:

(a) Senior staff from urban primary schools (US)

(b) Teachers in urban primary schools (UT)

(c) Staff in Aboriginal Schools (AS)

(Note: It was decided to combine the information from seniors in Aboriginal schools with that of teachers in Aboriginal schools as comments indicated that seniors had a high teaching load and were making comments as teachers and vice versa. For questions that seniors only were asked to answer an additional category for seniors in Aboriginal schools (SA) was used and for questions which teachers only in Aboriginal schools were required to answer the abbreviation (TA) was used.

4.2 Awareness and Use of Materials by School Staff

The first question participants were asked was whether they had seen the materials. For ease of recognition, a picture of each

document was shown to interviewees and included in the questionnaire. The next question participants were asked was whether they had used the materials and for what purposes. The purposes listed in the questionnaire for participants to choose from were:

A - system-wide tests selected from the item pools;
B - classrooms tests and exercises selected from the item pools;
C - assessing student writing;
D - assessing other skills.

Tables 1 - 3 indicate participant awareness and use of materials and the purposes for which the materials were used.

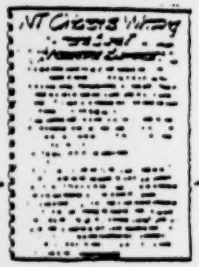
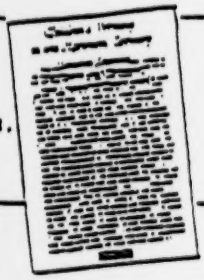
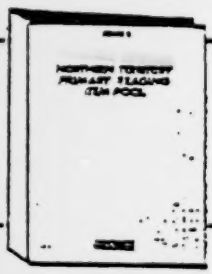
Graphs 1 - 3 show the percentages of the three groups; senior staff in urban schools (US), teachers in urban schools (UT) and staff in Aboriginal schools (AS), who had seen each of the materials and had used these either in the past or during 1988.

In urban schools a large majority of senior staff (approximately 85%) had seen the writing moderation booklets and the item pools. Seventy one percent of seniors reported having seen the 'Type C' document. Graph 1 shows dramatically that although a large majority of seniors had seen the materials, the proportion having used the materials, was much less, e.g. with the Type C document, 11% of the respondents reported having used it in 1988 and 47% said they had used it in the past.

Principals and senior teachers were asked to comment on how the materials were used and of what value they were to the school. Of the 38 questionnaires received from seniors in urban schools, 18 (47%) reported that the materials were used only for the annual system-wide tests with such comments as:

> *Used at Year 5 and 7 as requested.*
>
> *Utilized only for set system-wide tests.*
>
> *Little of the materials have any relevance to what is done in classrooms. Year 5 and 7 teachers do the annual required tests and that's all.*

Table 1 Urban Seniors' Awareness and Use of Materials

MATERIALS	SEEN	USED 1988	USED PREV	USED FOR
 1. Booklet 1983. buff cover.	89% (34)	38% (14)	61% (23)	A 18% B 8% C 55% D 3% N 29%
 2. Booklet 1988. grey cover.	89% (34)	47% (18)	37% (14)	A 8% B 16% C 50% D 3% N 32%
3. Folder 1983. orange cover.	89% (34)	24% (9)	61% (23)	A 53% B 34% C 3% D 3% N 24%
4. Folder 1983. green cover.	87% (33)	24% (9)	55% (21)	A 45% B 34% C 3% D 3% N 29%
 5. Folder 1983. tan cover.	79% (30)	16% (6)	66% (25)	A 50% B 29% C 0% D 11% N 29%
6. Folder 1983. tan cover.	74% (28)	13% (5)	58% (22)	A 39% B 24% C 0% D 8% N 34%
7. Folder 1986. orange cover.	71% (27)	11% (4)	42% (16)	A 13% B 13% C 5% D 8% N 61%
	Total Number of Respondents 38			

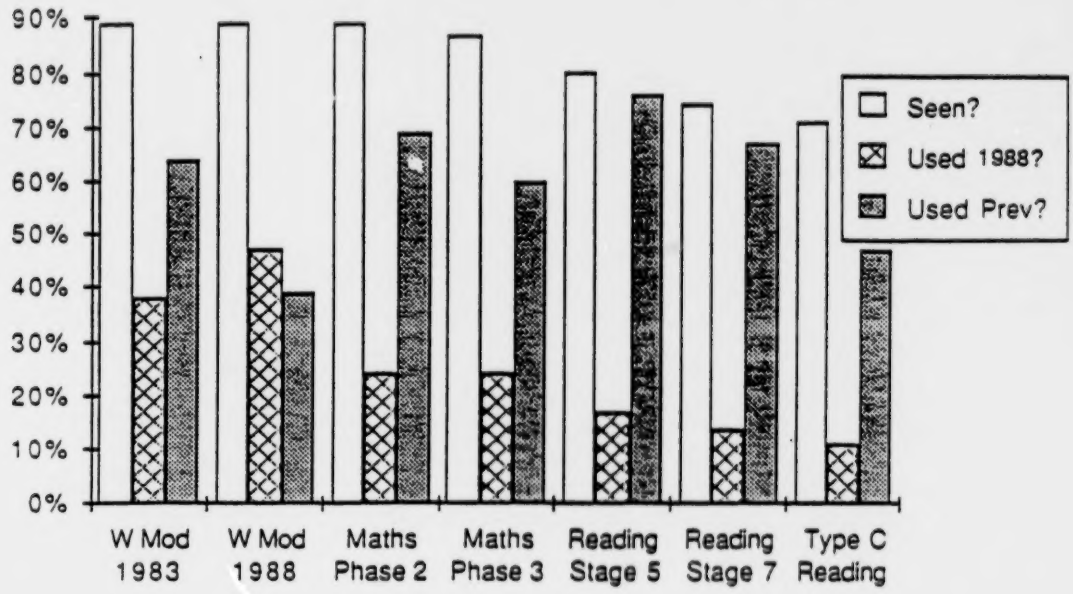
NOTE

The figures in brackets show the number of positive responses in each category.

KEY

A - system-wide tests selected from the item pools
B - classroom tests and exercises
C - assessing student writing
D - assessing other skills
N - not used

Graph 1 Urban Seniors' Awareness and Use of Materials



Given as directed by program once a year. Not used at any other time and not used for diagnostic purposes when given.

Twelve of the 38 seniors said they made other use of the materials with such comments as:

Often used as end of term assessment materials.

Mainly used at the end of each term to assess progress of concepts covered earlier.

I have used the materials so that kids know what sort of tests they are going to have to do. With Maths they are not used to multiple choice questions.

Having only been 18 months at this particular school, my efforts have been directed to making teachers aware of the value of the material and encouraging the use of it.

Used by individual teachers to find weaknesses to teach to and provide guidelines for future programming and policy reviews.

Type C (Strategies for Assessing Reading) is useful for teachers. Type A and B (the item pools) are rarely used as diagnostic tools.

The only real document of value for me is the current writing. moderation booklet. I use this at least 6 times a year i.e. the frameworks are filled in for individual students narratives.

The remaining 26 seniors either said nothing or said they did not use the materials or they reported the materials were of little value to the school. Comments regarding this were:

Early use...identified several errors in answer sheets and some poor presentation.

System for establishing standard appeared questionable. Massive amount of work for questionable result.

As required by the Department. Is of little if any value to the school.

Of no benefit to the school.

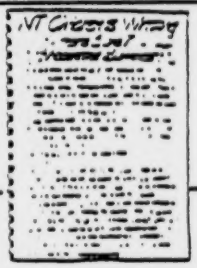
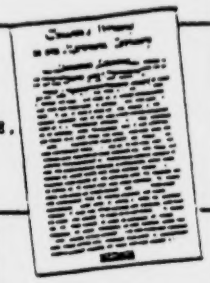
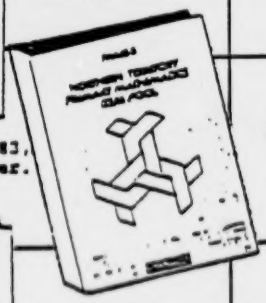
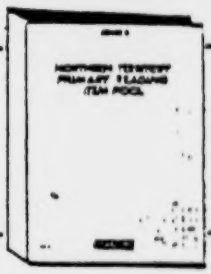
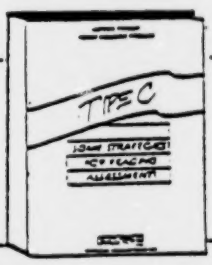
Not useful at all for ongoing assessment for teaching purposes.

During interviews with principals and senior teachers, similar comments were made about the use of materials. It appeared that where seniors were familiar with the program, the materials were being used to varying degrees in that particular school. In schools where seniors had little knowledge of the program and thought it only involved testing, the materials were not being used and in most cases seniors had no idea what materials should be in the school or where these were located. Examples of comments relating to this were:

The materials are recommended to staff to use. The writing moderation booklets are very good.

Don't see the need for item pools, teachers construct their own tests.

Table 2 Urban Teachers' Awareness and Use of Materials

MATERIALS	SEEN	USED 1988	USED PREV	USED FOR
 1. Booklet 1983, buff cover.	62% (35)	31% (16)	35% (18)	A 4% B 11% C 42% D 4% N 57%
 2. Booklet 1988, grey cover.	71% (37)	46% (24)	71% (37)	A 4% B 13% C 47% D 6% N 47%
3. Folder 1983, orange cover.	60% (31)	12% (6)	42% (22)	A 30% B 25% C 0% D 4% N 60%
 4. Folder 1983, green cover.	62% (32)	12% (6)	42% (22)	A 36% B 28% C 0% D 6% N 51%
 5. Folder 1983, tan cover.	58% (30)	10% (5)	33% (17)	A 36% B 25% C 4% D 8% N 58%
6. Folder 1983, tan cover.	54% (28)	10% (5)	33% (17)	A 34% B 19% C 2% D 6% N 60%
 7. Folder 1986, orange cover.	42% (22)	10% (5)	19% (10)	A 4% B 8% C 6% D 15% N 75%
	Total Number of respondents 52			

NOTE

The figures in brackets show the number of positive responses in each category.

KEY

A - system-wide tests selected from the item pools
B - classroom tests and exercises
C - assessing student writing
D - assessing other skills
N - not used

The writing moderation booklets are very good, especially the narrative writing. The assessment sheets are very good.

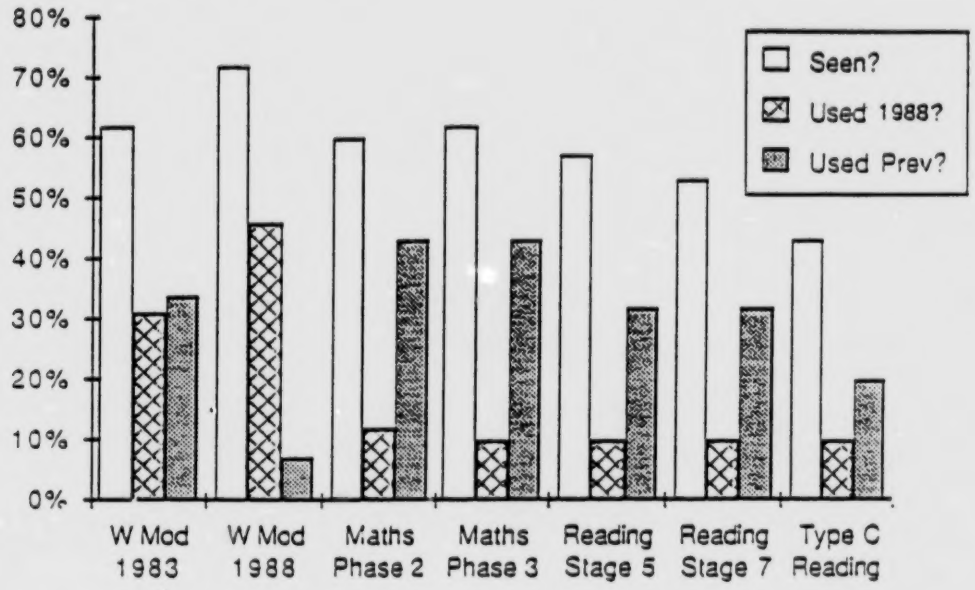
In this school, as in the last school I was in, the impression that was strongly held was that the materials were not to be used for anything else except testing.

A major hurdle is the fact that the folders were required for the tests. Now that this is not the case, with the Department sending schools the tests that are needed, schools must be shown how they can use the documents.

'Sell' the program to AP's (assistant principals). The idea of a video is excellent.

Urban teachers were asked whether they had seen the various assessment documents and whether they had used the materials in 1988 and in previous years. They were also asked to comment on the purposes for which the documents were used and whether they thought the documents of value to their teaching. Graph 2 and Table 2 summarise their replies.

Graph 2 Urban Teachers' Awareness and Use of Materials



Fewer classroom teachers than seniors had seen the range of materials. Twenty two of the 52 respondents (42%) reported that they had seen the Type C document, approximately 60% had seen the reading and Mathematics item pools and 72% had seen the 1988 writing moderation booklet. However, a much smaller percentage of the respondents reported that they had used the materials, either in the past or during 1988. Approximately 35% of the respondents had used the item pools in past years with only about 10% having used them during 1988. Graph 2 demonstrates this dramatically. The exception to this pattern is with the writing moderation booklets. As the graph indicates over 70% of urban teachers had seen the 1988 booklet and 46% had used it. Half of the 60% who had seen the 1983 writing moderation booklet reported they had used it.

With regard to the teachers who had used the Mathematics and reading items pools (see Table 2), approximately 35% reported using them for the system-wide testing exercise with approximately 25% saying they had used them for class tests or exercises.

Fewer teachers reported having seen the the 'Type C' document 'Strategies for Reading Assessment' than any of the other documents. Only five respondents (10%) said they had actually used this document in 1988 and only 10 (20%) had used it in previous years.

It is obvious from some of the selections made by teachers on the questionnaires as to the purposes for which materials were used, that they had no knowledge of the materials in question as they could not be used for the purpose selected. For example 4% of teachers indicated that the writing moderation booklets and the Type C document were used for system-wide testing. This is a basic misconception, since only the item pools were used for this purpose.

During visits to schools it was very often necessary to show the materials to teachers and explain how they could be used as the teachers had little knowledge of program materials.

The following are examples of comments made by teachers demonstrating their lack of awareness and use of materials:

The teachers aide was responsible for photocopying the tests so the folders were just buried in the store. I didn't realize they could be used for everyday lessons, I wish I had.

The fact that the senior or Assistant Principal is responsible for administering the tests, has meant that the documents have been reserved for the end of year tests and that teachers have not had the opportunity or been encouraged to use them as resource material.

There is lack of knowledge and understanding of the program. It needs to be explained to 'senior management'.

Those teachers who had used the materials had found them quite useful, as is indicated in the following comments:

I use the Maths item bank to assess core mastery prior to class evaluation of more difficult content. Reading banks are used along with other class constructed evaluations.

The Maths item pools can be used either to test or teach a concept. Also the 'breaking down' of Maths concepts into several sections or aspects psychologically is appealing as it appears to make teaching a particular concept much easier. On the other hand if used for testing, it helps to pinpoint more accurately any areas of difficulty.

On several of the questionnaires that had not been completed, there were comments such as the following:

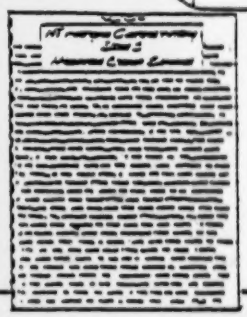
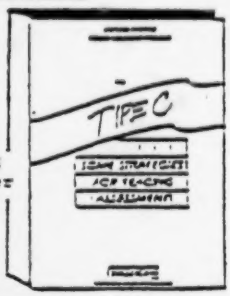
New to the Territory, have not seen these materials.

Didn't know they existed.

Cannot comment as I have not used these.

Unable to comment as these materials do not appear to be in this school.

Table 3 Awareness and Use of Materials - Aboriginal Schools

MATERIALS	SEEN	USED 1988	USED PREV	USED FOR
	85% (44)	31% (16)	50% (26)	A 17% B 31% C 0.5% D 8% N 21%
Folder 1986 yellow cover	79% (41)	37% (19)	50% (26)	A 19% B 27% C 4% D 6% N 23%
	73% (38)	9% (5)	27% (14)	A 2% B 6% C 17% D 0% N 35%
Folder 1986 orange cover 	42% (22)	13% (7)	12% (6)	A 4% B 8% C 2% D 4% N 39%
	Total Number of respondents 52			

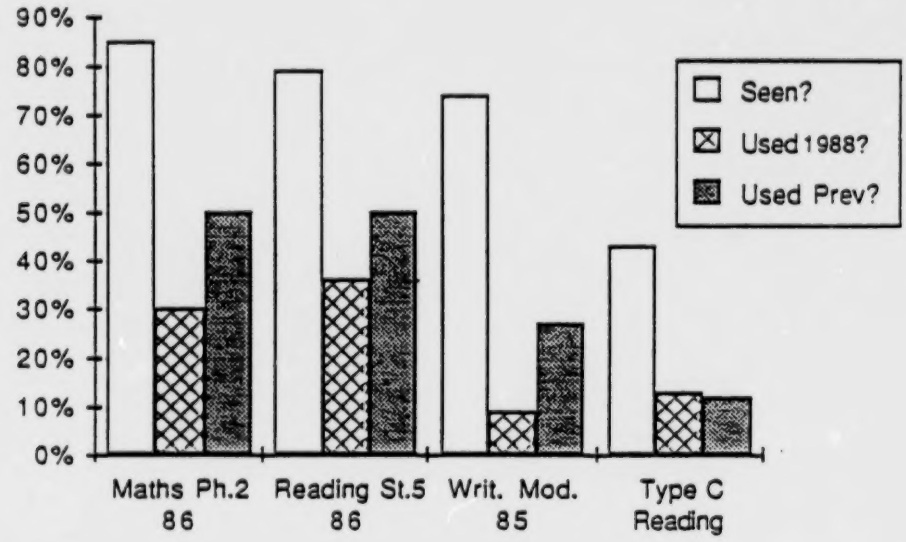
NOTE

The figures in brackets show the number of positive responses in each category.

KEY

A - system-wide tests selected from the item pools
B - classroom tests and exercises
C - assessing student writing
D - assessing other skills
N - not used

Graph 3 Awareness and Use of Materials - Aboriginal Schools



As can be seen from the graph, a large number of staff (74% - 85%) had seen the item pools and the writing moderation booklet. However, only 43% of staff had seen the Type C document. Fifty percent of staff had used the item pools in the past with a smaller percentage having used them in 1988. Table 3 indicates that of those who had used the item pools approximately 18% had used them for the annual testing and approximately 30% had used them for class tests and exercises. Selected examples of comments about the use of materials follow:

> *To test a certain procedure (e.g. addition). For end of year testing. Quite valuable for older children - no benefit for younger ones.*
>
> *They are useful as a class test after completing relevant work beforehand.*
>
> *The materials have been used to familiarize children with test materials and ascertain areas of concern and poor performance.*
>
> *I used it to work out the standard of the children where I didn't have any other children for comparison.*

I have used the reading and Mathematics item pools several times during the year as examples for the children before giving them the actual ones used for the assessment.

Only a small percentage of staff from Aboriginal schools had used the writing moderation booklet. Nine percent had used the booklet in 1988 and 27% reported they had used it in the past. Similarly, very few had used the Type C document. Thirteen percent said they used the document in 1988 and 12% said they had used it previously.

Comments on several of the questionnaires and during interviews provided reasons for questions concerning materials not being answered. An example of such comments were:

I have not seen them.

I am only finding out about it all just now.

As I have just become teacher in charge I have not seen any of the materials.

Have seen the materials but not used any.

They are not used.

So far these assessment materials have not been used.

Very little use or value, except for some advanced primary students or post primary.

Of the 10 Aboriginal schools visited, only two appeared to have the full set of documents. In the other eight schools at least one of the documents could not be located.

NOTE: It must be noted that some respondents either did not understand the question concerning the use of materials or they lacked knowledge of the materials as some reported using the materials for purposes for which these materials are not suited, e.g. 13% of urban seniors, 8% of urban teachers and 4% of staff from Aboriginal schools reported using Type C for system-wide

tests. Similar numbers reported writing moderation booklets were used for system-wide tests. This is a misconception as these two sets of materials were designed for school use only.

4.3 Materials - Their Place in Schools

The information presented in this section of the report was obtained mainly through observation and interviews while visiting schools. As only a percentage of the schools was visited, a degree of caution should be observed in generalizing from this data to the Territory as a whole. However, from discussions with subject advisers and regional superintendents, and checks for possible bias, there appears to be no reason to believe that the following picture of the place of materials in schools is atypical.

As explained earlier in the report, the Mathematics and English item pools were sent to urban schools in 1984 and to Aboriginal schools in 1986. Because it was explained to schools that the annual tests were to be taken from these documents, they were guarded by school seniors and kept 'safe' so that tests could be photocopied at the end of each year. In the majority of schools visited, it appears that multiple copies were made of all the tests and these were filed in special filing cabinets, some of which were purchased by the Department specifically for this purpose. This meant that many classroom teachers did not have access to the materials for class tests and exercises as was planned.

As additional materials were sent to schools, e.g. the writing moderation booklets and the Type C document, these were frequently distributed to subject faculties and stored in various places around the schools. In over half of the schools visited, it was necessary to physically search for the documents. In only three of these schools were they stored in a central place within the school - in the Principal's or Assistant Principal's office, the library and the book store.

In most cases, before carrying out interviews, it was necessary to describe either to the interviewee or at a staff meeting what the Primary Assessment Program is. Many of those interviewed did not know that the item pools were for classroom use, did not realize that documents such as the writing moderation booklets were part of the assessment program, and had the impression that the

Primary Assessment Program consisted of "those tests we have to do at the end of the year".

From the interviews, comments which substantiate these observations included:

> *The materials are mainly kept for the one thing - testing. (senior teacher, urban school)*
>
> *The materials should be kept in a teacher resource area, probably the staffroom is a good place. (Teacher, urban school)*
>
> *The item pools are kept in the storeroom near the front office. The aide is responsible for the photocopying when we get notice to do the tests. (Assistant Principal, urban school)*
>
> *Not sure that all materials are here. We used the item pools last year for photocopying the tests. I am not sure we have the rest. (Principal, Aboriginal school)*
>
> *I have never seen these materials. I can't recall them ever being received in this school (Assistant Principal, Area School).*

4.4 Teachers' Views of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Materials

Urban teachers (UT) and teachers in Aboriginal schools (TA) were asked to comment on what they saw as the strengths and weaknesses of the three types of materials - the Mathematics and Reading Item Pools; the writing moderation booklets and "Type C - Strategies for Reading Assessment". A total of 52 teachers in urban primary schools and 27 teachers in Aboriginal schools returned the questionnaires. Tables 4, 5 and 6 provide a summary of replies.

Table 4 Strengths and Weaknesses of Item Pools

Strengths	UT	TA
Used as reference material. Provides good ideas for teaching. A resource. Helpful. Accessible. Useful guide for planning.	17	10
Tests basic concepts. Evaluates abilities/readiness. Diagnostic. Provides assessment through another person's eyes. Good variety.	19	5
Standardised reference for teachers. Provides uniformity to education system. A valid testing system. Tests seem accurate.	17	2
Total number of comments	53	17
No comment on strengths of item pools.	19	11
Weaknesses		
Not related to classroom learning. Maths too simple. Lower/higher levels needed. Not diagnostic.	18	2
Reading - lack of interpretive material. Reading material not relevant to NT kids. Does not relate to Aboriginal education.	7	6
Not enough whole school inservicing done on it. No follow-up support.	4	3
Tests are time consuming. Waste of time. Expensive. Too much photocopying Late or no feedback from tests. Mistakes in materials.	15	5
Other	16	2
Total number of comments	60	18
No comment on Weaknesses	27	12
Total number of respondents	52	27

From the table the perceived strengths of the item pools fitted into three major categories; useful as reference material, provides a standard, and has some diagnostic value.

The main weakness reported by urban teachers was that the materials were not related to classroom learning. They made special reference to the Mathematics item pool tests which were considered too easy for the year levels for which they were

prescribed. Presumably this was because the item pools did not test beyond the core objectives. As the tests are extended to assess the full Board Approved curriculum, such criticisms should dissapear. Another major weakness noted by both groups, although not directly related to the intrinsic worth of the materials, was that the test administration was expensive in terms of time and paper in photycopying. To avoid this problem, multiple copies of tests are now being printed centrally and distributed to schools.

Table 5 Strengths and Weaknesses of Writing Moderation

Strengths	UT	TA
Realistic look at children's writing other than own school. Allows comparison of standards.	22	2
Good evaluation system. Gives teachers a new approach to gaining written written materials from children. Support materials in booklets are great!	37	1
Number of comments on strengths	75	3
No comment on the strengths of writing moderation materials	16	19
Weaknesses		
Time consuming. Doesn't cover all genres	7	0
Narrow range of samples. Final product only.	4	4
Other	6	0
Number of comments on weaknesses	17	4
No comment on weaknesses.*(18 + 19) *18 made comment on strengths only, and no comment on the weaknesses. (It is assumed that those who found strengths did not find weaknesses in the writing moderation booklets). 17 made comment on both strengths and weaknesses and 19 made no comment at all.	37	19
Total number of respondents	52	27

Urban teachers supplied 75 comments on the strengths of the writing moderation compared to 17 comments about the weaknesses. The two strengths of the writing moderation booklets were that it provides a standard and is good assessment support material.

Thirty nine percent of respondents from Aboriginal schools saw the writing moderation as being very useful and excellent support material. This may be an indication of the method of development of this document i.e. teachers were directly involved in providing samples for the booklet.

Table 6 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Type C Document

Strengths	UT	TA
Good variety of ideas and activities. Non-threatening. Useful collection of reading materials. Good resource.	11	3
Other e.g. Needs to be inserviced.	5	0
Number of comments	16	3
No comment on the strengths of Type C or hadn't seen.	36	20
Weaknesses		
Need to be promoted more. More inservice.	4	0
Wider achievement levels at upper and lower end of scale would be helpful for diagnosis. Does not relate to Aboriginal education.	1	2
Number of comments	5	2
No comment on weaknesses. Have not seen materials.	47	22
Total number of respondents	52	27

It is obvious from the information presented in the tables that teachers had much more to say about the item pools and the writing moderation booklets. It appears they are much more familiar with these documents than with Type C where over half of the respondents had not seen the document or did not make a comment about its strengths and weaknesses.

4.5 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program: Views of Senior Staff

Urban seniors (US) and principals and seniors in Aboriginal schools (SA) were asked to comment on what they saw as the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Table 6 summarises their comments.

Table 7 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program

	US	SA
Strengths		
Provides a standard. Gives uniformity to the education system. Good monitoring tool. Identifies strengths and weaknesses. Provides benchmarks .	21	14
Provides valuable resource material. Assists in reporting	16	9
Writing moderation valuable.	7	1
There is a need to test the system. Provides system monitoring.	2	3
Other.	4	1
Number of comments on strengths	50	28
No comment on strengths of the program	5	8
Weaknesses		
Time consuming. Waste of time. Expensive. Too much photocopying	11	3
Tests do not match classroom teaching. Not diagnostic. Nothing done with results. Disadvantages ESL students. Aboriginal children not at level of tests.	8	15
Not supported in the school. Little knowledge by classroom teachers, needs to be inserviced more. Not enough contact between Department and schools.	7	2
Mistakes in materials. Tests poorly designed. Students have to juggle papers.	5	3
Maths item pool too easy.	5	3
Other	9	2
Number of comments on weaknesses	48	25
No comment on weaknesses. Have not seen materials.	4	7
Total Number of respondents	38	27

Totals of 38 seniors in urban schools and 27 seniors in Aboriginal schools completed the questionnaire. They offered a total of 50 and 28 comments respectively on the strengths and 48 and 25 comments respectively on the weaknesses.

The major strength seen by each group was that it provides a standard and gives uniformity to the education system.

The major weakness of the program was the amount of photocopying and time required in preparation of the tests for administration. Other perceived weaknesses were that the testing does not relate to classroom learning and the tests are not diagnostic, there are mistakes in materials, and there has not been enough promotion and inservice on the program.

4.6 Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Program as a Whole

When participants were asked to give their views on how they felt about the program as a whole and to provide any other comments, most of the replies fitted into categories of either being in favour of the program or not in favour of the program. Table 8 summarises these comments for the three groups - Urban seniors (US), Urban teachers (UT) and staff from Aboriginal schools (AS). Additional comments which did not fit into these two categories and which covered quite different subjects have been discussed further on in this section of the report.

Urban seniors gave a wide range of reasons for and against the program. Fourteen percent thought the program worthwhile while 14% of urban teachers saw it favourably because it provided a standard and reveals student inabilities. Staff from Aboriginal schools favoured the program because they thought it was a good idea but needed more work and more materials for Aboriginal schools. Respondents from all three groups would like to see more inservice on the program.

The main reasons given for not favouring the program were that it was time consuming and not cost effective. The program was also seen to be a cause of conflict between the Teachers' Federation and

the Department and that it was viewed as a step toward teacher assessment.

Table 8 Attitudes towards the Program as a Whole

	US	UT	AS
Comments in favour of the program			
Worthwhile. Helpful. Essential if Aboriginal schools are ever to improve standards. Extend it. Provides a standard. Reveals student's abilities and inabilities. Happy about it. Very pleased. Support the program.	11	9	5
Provides materials. Fine as an assessment tool in schools. Writing moderation is of value. Reading satisfactory. Year 7 Maths test is a step in the right direction.	8	6	6
Basically a good idea but needs more work. I like it but it needs a greater range of materials for Aboriginal schools/bilingual schools. Adequate for its purpose. Just okay. Reasonable.	11	6	13
Would like to see more visits from CAB officers and more inservice.	3	6	5
Totals	**33**	**27**	**29**
Comments not favouring the program			
Doubt that it is cost effective. Waste of time and money.	14	9	3
Nuisance. Imposition of a testing system. Creates more work and stress for teachers. Not a worthwhile activity. Centralized control. Inappropriate. My feelings towards the program are very negative.	8	7	5
Some materials have mistakes. Maths material in item pools is useless. Maths tests are inappropriate.	3	6	0
Cause of conflict between NTTF (hence teachers) and Department. Suspect this is a step toward teacher assessment.	3	0	1
Administration is not uniform. Teachers teach to the test/help kids with the tests.	0	4	2
Totals	**28**	**26**	**11**
Not answered, no comment.	**6**	**18**	**10**
Total number of respondents	**38**	**52**	**52**

In response to the questions concerning participants' attitudes towards the program as a whole, several of the responses did not fit into the categories in Table 8. As these varied greatly and were distinct from any other comments, some examples are provided below:

I would dearly like to see scholastic ability rewarded on an individual basis by the introduction of a Year 7 Scholarship which would give parents/students/teachers incentive to pursue even greater levels of academic excellence.

Maths tests are too small and 'bitsy'. Children are confronted with a 'paper war' on their desk.

Tests are time consuming. Teachers and students are not committed or motivated to perform well. Tests (reading) are culture-biased. Errors are contained in many of the tests and have not been corrected in the past three years of my experience teaching Year 5.

I would like more explanation of WHY system-wide testing (examinations) are needed; their purpose? Why not continue with sample testing for curriculum and standards purposes?

If you want standardised results then the tests will have to all be administered the same way, otherwise you are wasting your time. Hopefully the Maths test will do what you are claiming and not have a bias to a particular area of Maths.

Parents are not happy with the assessment program..... Assessment of children's learning is essential but NOT on a system-wide style basis.....A recent survey of our parents say they are not anxious to have external exams for primary age kids. The failure syndrome is not conducive to effective teaching and is inherent in system-wide tests.

Please keep material and criteria for Aboriginal schools separate from urban schools at this stage.

Test twice a year so teachers can see if there has been an improvement in their class. Tests could be handy for teacher's information and maybe school information but I don't think they should be used to compare schools.

For the testing program multiple copies should be sent to schools.

Make a video explaining the materials and how to use them

Need to compare NT students with students from other states.

As can be seen, these comments are wide and varied, however, there are some ideas that may be worth pursuing in any further review of the Primary Assessment Program.

4.7 Teachers' Views on Test Administration and Timing of the Tests

The major concern of schools with test administration, which was evidenced by comments on the questionnaires and during interviews, was the amount of photocopying that was required to prepare the tests and the time taken for administration. Changes in 1988 and 1989 should eliminate most of these problems.

The administration booklets sent with the 1988 test materials were thought to be an improvement on the previous instruction information. However, some teachers felt there was too much general information at the beginning of these documents. The following are examples of comments related to test administration:

In the document 'Northern Territory Primary Assessment Program for Urban Schools - Guidelines for Test Administration 1988' there is a lot of reading before you actually get to the instructions for administering the tests.

The guideline booklet is good. It is clear and straightforward, better than last year.

It would be good to have what group the school is in listed on the front of the book with the school number.

There is no information in the book about what we do with kids who are absent when the tests are given. We have tried to administer the tests when these kids return to school.

We had problems administering the new Mathematics test (for Aboriginal schools). This 65 item test is printed on both sides. A total of seven sheets of paper were used stapled in the top left hand corner. The fact the test was stapled at the top meant that when students had completed one page of questions they had to lift the whole paper, turn the previous page over the staple and turn the whole paper over to do the next set of questions. This caused some students to miss whole pages of questions and to become irritated. If the test had been made into a booklet with two staples on the left-hand side this problem could have been eliminated as children could then just turn the pages like a book.

The NOTE TO TEACHERS on the test said that it was to be administered in two sessions of 40 minutes each. Administration would have been made easier if the test had been put into two booklets.

The answer sheets would be better if they only had the answers for the particular test and not other tests that the student is not required to do.

Teachers were asked to provide information as to the most suitable time to administer the tests. A range of times and suggestions was provided, ranging from the beginning of the year to the end of the year with suggestions ranging from not administered at all to administered every term. The following table summarises the replies for the three groups of respondents: urban seniors (US); urban teachers (UT); and staff in Aboriginal schools (AS)

Table 9 Timing of the Tests.

	US	UT	AS
End of Term 3. (September)	10	9	17
End of year. November.	12	3	7
Beginning and end of year. End of each Semester. (Twice per year) Once per term. (Four times per year)	6	11	5
Beginning of Semester 2 (August)	1	8	7
Mid Term 4. (October)	1	5	3
Never.	7	2	8
Total number of comments	**37**	**38**	**47**
Question not answered.	**2**	**0**	**10**
Total number of respondents	**38**	**52**	**38**

It appears that September is the most favoured time for test administration, however, the end of the year was also a favoured time, especially with urban seniors. From discussions with teachers and comments in other sections of the report it appears different times are seen as more appropriate for different tests and for different school groups. The following comments elaborate on this theme:

> *Why was Year 7 chosen? If given at the end of Year 6 or at the beginning of Year 7 we could find out what kids know and need for preparation for high school, (urban teacher).*
>
> *November is a very bad time in Aboriginal schools to administer tests. Suggest late third term with results to schools fourth term, (teacher in an Aboriginal school).*
>
> *It would be a good idea to stagger the tests. For example the reading tests could be administered at the beginning of Semester 2, reading levels won't change. The results can be returned to schools within a month or so. This would allow schools to compare their classes with the*

rest of the Territory and give teachers a focus for their programming for the rest of the year. The Year 7 Mathematics test could be given at the end of the year when teachers had completed the course. Results could be used by secondary schools for placement of pupils, (subject adviser).

There is concern about the timing of the tests. The middle of October is too early - Year 7s have not finished their course. Results are not useful for high schools as they are not a true indication of what children can do at the end of primary school. Testing should be for a purpose. If the program is to provide an indication of standards at the end of primary schools then it should be administered at the end of primary schooling. To be useful to primary schools the testing program should be diagnostic. It would be very useful for schools to have tests aimed at the end of Year 6 level which could be administered at the beginning of Year 7. This could provide diagnostic information for the school and also provide Territory wide information which could compare schools. The Year 7 tests could be administered at the beginning of the year to Year 8 students. This would serve two purposes - it would provide the Department with the information required as to the academic standards in Maths and English of students who had completed primary school and also provide high schools with placement information for their students (compared Territory wide). It would also be good to have a test at the beginning of Year 4, (principal, urban primary school).

The comments provide conflicting views as to the most suitable time for test administrastion. One of the determining factors for the differing views is the purpose for which teachers see tests being employed. There appears to some confusion amongst staff as to the diagnostic nature of the Primary Assessment Program. It appears that teachers only consider tests can be diagnostic on an individual level and do not view the testing program as being diagnostic on a school or state level. Possibly, teachers need to be made more aware that the Primary Assessment Program materials can be used diagnostically by schools or individual teachers at any time throughout the year.

4.8 How Teachers Became Aware of the Program

Staff were asked to comment on how they found out about the Primary Assessment Program. The following chart is a summary of replies from urban seniors (US), urban teachers (UT) and staff from Aboriginal Schools (AS).

Table 10 Finding Out About the Primary Assessment Program

	US	UT	AS
Staff meetings. From other staff.	8	23	10
Departmental circulars. Receiving materials in the school.	19	10	22
Through participation in the testing program. Told to do the tests	9	12	9
Involved in trialling. Involved in materials development. Through media.	2	4	1
Inservice at the school with the writing moderation.	3	4	2
Didn't know it existed. Through this questionnaire	1	3	4
*Total number of comments	42	56	48
No comment	6	10	15
Total number of respondents	38	52	38

*As some of the respondent's comments involved more than one point in relation to the way in which they found out about the program, the number of comments is greater than the number of respondents.

The table indicates that most of the teachers found out about the program either by contact with other members of staff or through Departmental circulars. The next most common method of finding out about the program was by participation in the testing program. A number of school staff, especially in Aboriginal schools did not make a comment or said they did not know the program existed, e.g. 50% of staff from Aboriginal schools fitted into this category.

During interviews with school staff, it was obvious that many did not know about all of the materials. The degree of ignorance was such that the program had to be explained and materials shown so

that the interviewees understood what the interview was about. Most participants, if they knew anything about the Primary Assessment Program, understood it to involve the tests that were to be administered at the end of each year. Several principals did not know what materials were supposed to be in the school.

After explanation and display of materials the majority of interviewees expressed interest in using the materials and learning more about them. Examples of comments which demonstrate this include:

> *As far as inservicing the program, this should be aimed at principals, assistant principals and band 2's at the beginning of each year. In places like Darwin, advisers could attend school meetings or joint school meetings to give information on the program.*
>
> *The idea behind the materials must be 'sold'. Firstly to the assistant principals and seniors who must then 'sell' it to their teachers.*
>
> *There is a lack of knowledge and understanding of the program. It needs to be explained to 'senior management'.*
>
> *A video showing the materials, and explaining the testing program would be very useful to schools. It would be great for old and new teachers alike.*
>
> *The materials appear to be useful resources. All upper primary teachers should know about them.*

4.9 Achievement of Program Aims: Views of Senior Staff

Principals and seniors in urban and Aboriginal schools were asked whether they felt each of the two basic aims of the Primary Assessment Program were being met. The two aims are:

1. to monitor achievement in English and Mathematics in Northern Territory primary schools.

2. to provide teachers in the upper primary with materials for assessing the competency of students in Mathematics and English.

A total of 38 questionnaires were received from urban seniors (US) and 27 from seniors in Aboriginal schools (SA). Comments on each aim were analysed into two categories - agreement (Yes) disagreement (No). A summary of replies is shown in the following tables.

Table 11 Achievement of Aim 1

Aim 1 (to monitor standards)	US	SA
Yes (Agree)		
Yes, feedback indicates this. Gives general indication of standards.	4	1
Partially - the package can assist teachers in assessing some facets of competency. At a basic level. Reading partially. not enough feedback.	6	5
Yes (with no comment supplied).	9	2
Totals	19	8
No (Disagree)		
No, to test minimum competency is not an indication of the standard of achievement. Results unreliable as teachers assist students.	7	4
No, philosophically opposed as they do not benefit children. NTTF bans	1	4
No, not at present. Tests are limited in some areas.		
No, (with no comment supplied.)	11	8
Totals	19	16
Not answered **Totals**	0	3
Total number of respondents	38	27

Half of the seniors in urban schools agreed that the aim of monitoring standards was being achieved while the other half thought the aim was not being met. Only 8 (33%) of the 24 seniors in Aboriginal schools who answered this question, thought that aim 1 was being achieved. Of those who did agree, many thought that it was only partially being achieved. The main reasons given for the

aim not being achieved were related mainly to the tests and test administration.

Table 12 Achievement of Aim 2

Aim 2 (Assessment materials for use in schools)	US	SA
Yes (Agree)		
Materials are quite sound. Used within schools as a means of monitoring effectiveness of instruction. Generally useful. Writing moderation excellent.	13	4
Yes partially. Although I don't think teachers make as much use of this as they could. Not all of the material is suitable.	4	5
Yes (with no comment supplied.)	7	9
Totals	24	18
No (Disagree)		
Not utilised by teachers. Teachers do not use materials. Teacher prepared tests based on actual teaching is more relevant.	4	3
English no.	2	0
No. (with no comment supplied)	10	2
Totals	14	5
Not answered **Totals**	0	4
Total number of respondents	38	27

The majority thought the aim 2 was being achieved and that the materials were useful to teachers or they felt that they could be useful.

Over 60% of senior staff in both urban and Aboriginal schools felt that the program had achieved the aim of providing assessment materials for teachers to use. Of those who disagreed or felt that the aim was partially being achieved, the reasons provided focussed on the point that teachers do not utilize the materials.

Approximately half of the participants, both from urban and Aboriginal schools, provided a yes or a no answer without making a comment.

4.10 Improving Academic Standards?

Teachers and seniors in urban primary schools and Aboriginal schools were asked if they felt the Primary Assessment Program was helping to improve academic standards across the Territory. As with the achievement of aims, replies were varied. The following table summarises the replies.

Table 13 Improving Standards?

	US	UT	AS
Yes (the program helps to improve academic standards)			
It sets a standard. It motivates teachers and students. It is a challenge for those not doing well. Any form of assessment must help improve standards.	8	10	13
The new year 7 Maths test and the writing moderation booklets have improved standards. Is a starting point, need further improvement.	1	6	6
Plays a diagnostic role.	2	1	3
Totals	11	17	22
No (the program does not help to improve standards)			
There is little feedback from the Department. More follow-up is required. So little known about it. Lack of awareness.	9	7	4
Only used for system-wide tests. It is a too one-offish event. Schools teach to the test and thus invalidate results.	2	5	2
This type of testing is too restrictive. Curriculum is not rigid enough to allow such rigid testing. Not diagnostic. Chore for teachers.	3	4	4
Tests cannot improve standards. Are of no benefit to the school. Not relevant. Not reliable. Not useful for ESL students.	1	4	6
Totals	15	20	16
Total number of comments	26	37	38
Not answered or unsure **Totals**	12	15	14
Total number of respondents	38	52	52

Approximately 60% of the urban teachers and seniors who answered this question felt the Primary Assessment Program did not help to improve academic standards. This figure was reversed for staff in Aboriginal school where approximately 60% of those who commented felt that the program was assisting in improving academic standards.

The main reason provided for improvement was that the program sets a standard and provides motivation for students and teachers. Reasons given to substantiate why the program was not improving standards were; a lack of awareness of the program; and that the testing was too restrictive and not diagnostic.

4.11 Use Made of Information by Schools

Personnel were asked if they had seen the results and reports and to what uses this information was put. Tables 14 and 15 provide a summary of replies to this question.

Table 14 Awareness of Results

	US	UT	AS
YES have seen results			
Use to evaluate class weaknesses and strengths.	17	5	7
Compare with Territory average.	7	4	3
Of little value, not used.	11	3	11
Not followed up as results came too late. Results too technical.	5	2	2
Totals	33	25	25
NO not seen Totals	2	25	22
Question not answered Totals	3	2	5
Total number of respondents	38	52	52

Eightly seven percent of urban seniors had seen the test results while only 50% of urban teachers had seen the results. Fifty percent of staff in Aboriginal schools had seen the results. Seventy three percent of the urban seniors who had seen the results thought they were useful to evaluate strengths and weakness and/or useful for comparisons with NT standards. Thirty three percent of urban seniors and 44% or staff from Aboriginal schools who had seen the results did not use them or thought they were of little value.

Table 15 Awareness of Reports

	US	UT	AS
YES have seen reports			
Take note of strengths and weaknesses. Teach where results are low. Good to know patterns of student performance for the NT.	10	8	6
Of little value. Well presented and documented but not used.	13	4	8
Would be good to get reports earlier.	1	6	2
Totals	**26**	**21**	**21**
NO have not seen reports			
No (with no comment provided)	10	21	22
Never. What reports. Didn't know there were any	0	2	4
Totals	**10**	**23**	**26**
Question not answered	**2**	**8**	**5**
Total number of respondents	**38**	**52**	**52**

Seventy one percent of urban seniors, 40% of urban teachers and 40% of staff from Aboriginal schools had seen the reports. Of those who had seen the reports approximately half of these thought that although the reports were well presented, they were of little value to the schools. Respondents who had seen the reports thought them useful in evaluating weaknesses and

strengths and in comparing their students with Territory standards.

4.12 Use Made Of Information by the Department

The use made of the information gained from the Primary Assessment Program, and in particular from the testing program, was not a major concern of this study. However, during visits to schools and in discussions with Departmental personnel, several references were made to the perceived lack of action on the test results.

The following comments are examples of this concern:

> *Who in the Department looks at the results? If they are looked at, what is being done with the information. Someone should follow this up (Education Officer).*
>
> *It would be useful if results could go to schools at the end of the testing year and that maybe the Territory results could be included in individual report cards The results are not being used to their full advantage (principal, urban school).*
>
> *I am concerned that schools have the option of choosing who should sit the tests, this skews the results, All students should sit the tests and results should be available for advisory staff to assist schools in areas of weaknesses (superintendent).*
>
> *What happens to the results? The Department does nothing with the results anyway. Schools and teachers do not get any more assistance or inservice (teacher, Aboriginal school).*
>
> *The testing program must change with changes in curricula. The English tests should be kept in line with the new English curriculum. With the change in emphasis towards teaching of different genres test scripts should reflect each of the genres. The topics and information in the tests must be up-to-date especially if it comes from such sources as newspapers (curriculum officer).*

The area of upgrading materials and tests is being addressed by the Primay Assessment Committee by way of continual review of the program. However, action to improve test results is a much broader issue and under current policy individual school results are not available to Departmental personnel. In the original agreement on the Primary Assessment Program all results are confidential:

> *It is therefore imperative that such tests be devised to encompass the widest scope of the courses and secondly, that confidentiality of the results of schools and teachers be maintained (Minutes of the Curriculum Advisory Committee Meeting, December 1982, p. 23).*

This has been advantageous to the success of the program in that schools have participated because results are kept confidential. However, this has also meant that superintendents/subject advisers do not know which schools do badly and cannot take appropriate action and cannot identify where performance is good and examine factors in such schools which could be applied to other schools to improve performance.

The results are published in the annual reports which describe areas of strength and weakness in Mathematics and English at the levels tested. These reports are available to all Departmental personnel. Since 1987 the individual school results included final scores and percentage scores for each student on each test as well as the school result and the Territory result. This should have allowed schools to use the results to work on areas of weakness, or to commend teachers on areas of strength in the school.

4.13 The Year 7 Mathematics Test 1988

Because the new Year 7 Mathematics was very different from the previous tests, a separate evaluation sheet was developed and sent to schools for information on the reaction to this test. Questions were asked on the time allowed, date and format of the tests as well as the range and difficulty of items and their relation to the curriculum. Participating schools were asked for further comments on the Year 7 test or on the Primary Assessment Program. Table 16 summarises the replies to this questionnaire.

Table 16 Reactions to the Year 7 Mathematics Test 1988

Time allowed for test (i.e. 75 minutes)	N	%
Time allowed for test is satisfactory.	22	61%
Too much time was allowed.	4	11%
Not enough time was allowed.	7	20%
Divide the test into two sessions.	3	8%
Total number of comments	36	
Date of the test (19th October 1988)		
Date satisfactory.	5	19%
Too early, Year 7 work incomplete.	8	31%
Too late e.g. for diagnostic purposes.	9	35%
Should allow more flexibility.	4	15%
Total number of comments	26	
Format		
Format satisfactory.	19	70%
Formality and length off-putting. Students panic at formality of the test.	6	22%
Fewer multiple choice would be better. Items could be grouped.	2	8%
Total number of comments	27	
Range and Difficulty		
Satisfactory.	13	34%
More basic questions needed. Too difficult.	13	34%
Innacurate or ambiguous.	9	24%
Too little emphasis on problem solving. Include harder questions.	3	8%
Total number of comments	38	
Relation to the Curriculum		
Satisfactory/comprehensive/relevant.	10	63%
Beyond WA Mathematics syllabus at Year 7.	4	25%
The syllabus stresses decimals e.g. for π.	2	12%
Total number of comments	16	
Further Comments		
Year 5 should have a similar test to reduce photocopying.	3	14%
New test is more suitable.	4	19%
More tests of this type are needed, e.g. at year 6 as a pre-test.	5	24%
Students with learning difficulties suffer.	3	14%
Other.	6	29%
Total number of comments	21	
Total Number of Respondents	43	

Sixty six schools were contacted and 43 questionnaires were returned. Where multiple comments were made they were counted in the most appropriate section.

Over 60% of respondents felt the time allowed for the tests, the test format, and the tests' relation to the curriculum were generally satisfactory. However, there was disagreement on the date of the tests, with the greater proportion of teachers saying the test was either too early because Year 7 work was not complete, or too late to be of value diagnostically. Quite a number of teachers felt that more basic questions were needed and that some of the questions were ambiguous or were too difficult in that they tested a range of concepts in the same question.

Comments such as 'Year 5 should have a similar test' have already been taken into consideration by the Primary Assessment Committee which has proposed a year 5 test based on the Board Approved Curricula for the 1989 testing program.

Other common comments included: 'the new Year 7 test is more suitable', 'more tests like this are needed e.g. at a Year 6 level or as a pre-test for Year 7'.

Common negative comments included: 'students with learning difficulties and English as a Second Language suffer', 'students panicked at the formality of the test'.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

5.1 Introduction

In summary the two major aims of the program were to:

(i) monitor academic standards; and

(ii) provide assessment materials

During the period 1984 - 1989 a total of 10 assessment documents have been produced and introduced into schools. During the introduction of the program in 1984 into urban schools there was a high level of inservice provided. In 1986 when the program was introduced into Aboriginal schools, very little inservicing was done. Subsequently there was little follow-up inservice on the program prior to that conducted in 1989.

The aim to monitor standards appears to have been achieved, especially with the urban program. However, due to union bans and a lack of knowledge of the program by staff, the participation rate for Aboriginal schools has been lower than expected.

A survey of teacher perceptions of the program was carried out by questionnaire and a number of schools were visited. Completed questionnaires were received from:

38 senior staff in urban primary schools (57% response rate);

52 Year 5, 6, 7 urban primary teachers;

52 staff from Aboriginal schools (37% response rate);

43 urban school staff who were involved with the 1988 Year 7 Mathematics Test (65% response rate).

5.2 Summary of Findings

- Awareness and Use of Materials

Approximately 70% of all staff had seen some or all of the materials and approximatly half of all staff had used at least some of the materials.

The most commonly used materials were the Mathematics item pools which were mainly used for system-wide tests and the least used was the Type C document 'Strategies for Reading Assessment'

Seniors in urban schools were the group most familiar with most of materials with urban teachers being the group least familiar with materials.

Approximately 80% of seniors had seen the materials and approximately half of these had used the materials at some stage.

Approximately 50% of Year 5, 6, 7 teachers in urban primary schools had seen the various assessment materials, with fewer having used these, especially in 1988

Approximately 80% of staff in Aboriginal schools had seen the item pools and the writing moderation booklet but only 43% had seen the Type C document. Use made of the materials, however, was low, especially use in 1988. Again the greatest use of materials occured with the item pools which were used for system-wide testing.

- Materials - Their Place in Schools

Based on visits to school, there appears to be a degree of ignorance as to what the Primary Assessment Program is. Many of those interviewed perceived the program to involve only the annual testing and were not aware of the assessment materials, and if they were aware of the materials e.g. the writing moderation booklets, they did not realize these were part of the Primary Assessment Program.

- Strengths and Weaknesses of Materials

The item pools were the most commonly used materials and the perceived strengths were that they provided a standard and were useful reference materials for teachers. The perceived weaknesses were that they were not related to classroom learning, the Mathematics item pool is too simple for the year levels for which they were prescribed and that the preparation of tests from the item pools was very time consuming and a waste of paper.

The writing moderation booklets were very popular. Both the teachers from urban and Aboriginal schools felt these provided very good support material and allowed comparison of standards of their students' writing with the rest of the Territory. There were very few comments on weaknesses of the writing moderation booklets.

Only a small percentage of teachers commented on the type C document. However, those who did comment perceived it as a good resource providing a variety of ideas and activities. One of the weaknesses mentioned, which does not relate to the intrinsic merit of the document, was that it needs to be promoted more.

- Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program

The main strengths of the program are that it provides a standard and useful reference materials.

The most common weaknesses perceived were; lack of relevance, especially for Aboriginal children, mistakes in some of the materials, late feedback on results and wasted time and money in administering the tests. It was also mentioned that the program was a cause of conflict between the teachers' union and the Department.

- Attitudes Towards the Program as a Whole

Comments were evenly divided for and against the program and there was a wide range of reasons to substantiate the two views. Generally, those in favour thought it worthwhile because it provided a standard and useful resource material while those against thought it a waste of time and money, and not necessary.

- Test Administration and Timing of the Tests

Major concerns were the amount of photocopying and the time taken for test administration, although comments concerning the 1988 Year 7 Mathematics Test indicated that sending multiple copies of test materials to schools was a much appreciated change.

September was the most favoured time for testing, followed by the end of the year, however, there were many suggestions for administering different tests at times appropriate to the subject and year level.

- How Teachers Became Aware of the Program

Most commonly, teachers became aware of the program either though contact with other members of staff or through Departmental circulars. However, a large proportion, e.g. half of the staff from Abroginal schools, did not answer this question or said they did not know they program existed. The perception that many teachers had little knowledge of the program was sustantiated during visits to schools and in interviews with staff. However, suggestions on ways

to explain the program through inservice and/or producing a video were well supported.

- Achievement of Program Aims

Aim 1

Fifty percent of the seniors in urban schools agreed that the aim of monitoring standards was being achieved while the other 50% thought the aim was not being met. Only 33% of seniors in Aboriginal schools thought that aim 1 was being achieved. Of those who did agree, many thought that it was only partially being achieved. The reasons given for the aim not being achieved were related mainly to the tests and test administration.

Aim 2

Over 60% of senior staff in both urban and Aboriginal schools felt that the program had achieved the aim of providing assessment materials for teachers to use. Of those who disagreed or felt that the aim was partially being achieved, the reasons provided focussed on the point that teachers do not utilize the materials.

- Improving Academic Standards?

Approximately 60% of the urban teachers and seniors felt the Primary Assessment Program did not help to improve academic standards. This figure was reversed for staff in Aboriginal schools where approximately 60% of those who commented felt that the program was assisting in improving academic standards.

Reasons given to substantiate why the program was improving standards were; that it sets a standard and provides motivation for students and teachers, Reasons given to substantiate why the program was not improving standards were; a lack of awareness of the program; and that the testing was too restrictive and not diagnostic.

- Awareness and use of Results and Reports

Eighty seven percent of urban seniors had seen the results, whereas only 50% of urban teachers and staff in Aboriginal schools had seen them. Even smaller proportions of school staff had seen the reports. The urban seniors felt the results and reports were useful in monitoring strengths and weaknesses in their school and in providing a Territory standard. The majority of urban teachers and staff in

Aboriginal schools felt the results and reports were of little value.

- The 1988 Year 7 Mathematics Test

Staff in urban primary schools were generally satisifed with the new Year 7 test. The majority felt it was a vast improvement on the previous Phase 3 Mathematics tests.

- The Testing Program as a Whole

The testing approach has been continually changing and developing over the operation of the program. Major changes occurred in 1988 and are proposed for 1989. These alterations should alleviate the problems schools have encountered in photocopying materials and administering tests.

The 1988 Year 7 Mathematics tests was generally thought to be satisfactory in format and content.

5.3 Conclusions

For the program to be effective as a whole, those involved including principals, seniors, subject advisers and regional superintendents, must be aware of the program as a whole. During interviews and in interpreting most of the answers to the questionnaires, the comments made were directed at the testing program rather than the program as a whole or at the assessment materials. The overall impression is that the majority of school staff are ignorant as to the purposes of the assessment materials. From interviews this was very apparent and it is suspected that some of the comments about the materials may have been made in ignorance. On the other hand, teachers who had used the materials as adjuncts to teaching were obviously impressed and found these very useful. A similar observation was made in regards to test results and reports. Those principals and seniors who had marked tests done at their schools, analysed results and made note of differences with Territory results saw the testing program as being valuable.

One of the main reasons it appears that the materials are not used as planned is that they have been held for the annual testing. As mentioned earlier in the report, the current and proposed changes will eliminate the need for the item pools to be 'kept' for the annual testing. The problem however is that teachers currently in the schools are not aware of the materials, and also it is suspected that materials have been misplaced or lost and that schools no longer

have the 'full set'. The current writing moderation booklets have been well received, but are not generally known to be part of the Primary Assessment Program.

The Primary Assessment Program has been successful in providing factual information about standards of student achievement in English and mathematics at Year 5 and Year 7. It has also made available a range of assessment materials for teachers, but the potential of both of these and the information about standards has yet to be fully realized. However, the testing program has undergone several changes over the last two years which should help to counter some of the criticisms of the program recorded in this report. It is essential that new curricula and changes in approaches to teaching be considered in further review of the tests.

The majority of seniors in urban primary schools appear to be aware of the materials but the level of productive use has varied greatly. In general, teaching staff in both urban and Aboriginal schools are not aware of the full potential of the assessment materials and this appears to have limited the use made of them.

For the program to be successful as a whole there is a need to ensure increased understanding of its potential and greater communication between the Department and the schools. The last two years have seen a move in this direction.

5.4 Issues

(i) Many teachers have little understanding or knowledge of the Program.

This suggests the need for an ongoing campaign to communicate the intentions and content of the Program to staff in schools However, the methods of promotions must be carefully considered and all options explored, to achieve the most cost-effective approach.

In 1989, two inservice courses on the Program were organised, to cater for urban schools in Darwin and Alice Springs. The level of response suggested that such courses may be worth repeating. There is also the need to extend such opportunities to staff in Aboriginal schools. Cost, however, is likely to be a limiting factor.

A brochure could be produced and sent to schools explaining the program and describing materials, in addition to the general circulars that go to schools. Case studies of schools where the

program is being used effectively could also be of value in demonstrating its potential to other schools.

A popular idea and one that might cater for all teachers requiring information on the program could be the making of a video which would give background information on the program, describe fully how to use the materials, and allow schools to understand results.

In addition, supervisory and advisory staff could discuss with teachers the use made of materials and results, during their routine visits to schools. There is the question of the repsonsibility of teachers to make themselves aware of what is available and its potential use. There must be a two-way responsibility. Without this, all the efforts of the Department are likely to be in vain.

(ii) Some schools have incomplete sets of materials

In view of the changing direction of the Program, it may be inappropriate to consider reissuing the original materials, either in their present, or in a revised, form. However, items from the new style tests will be available to schools and will gradually accumulate to form item banks which will replace the original item pools. Although this is a slow process, it is the optimum achievable within current resources.

Similarly, the production of writing moderation booklets, urban and Aboriginal schools in alternate years, will continue. Again, this approach is achievable within current resources.

(iii) Teachers have expressed doubts about the relevance of certain Primary Assessment Program materials for classroom use.

Because the items were targeted at the core objectives, they were frequently seen as too easy for many upper primary students. However, schools are free to use the items at whatever levels they consider appropriate. The range of items in the new tests, which are designed to assess not only the core objectives, but also the Approved Curriculum, should overcome this problem.

(iv) Only about half of all Aboriginal schools participate in the Program.

Of the non-participants, approximately half give as their reason the fact that none of their students is achieving at a Year 5 level. The

remainder give no reason for non-participation since they do not respond to communications about the Program.

There is thus clearly a need to achieve greater participation in the Program by Aboriginal schools. Some possible methods to accomplish this may be to hold sessions at as many inservice courses as possible that involve staff from Aboriginal schools, visit schools, and/ or get advisers who are visiting schools to discuss the program while they are there. So far, all efforts have aimed at encouraging teachers to carry out their duties. This could be insisted upon.

It may also be desirable to reconsider the current policy which allows Aboriginal schools to exclude any students not considered to be performing at the Year 5 level. An alternative would be to adopt the rules which apply in urban schools, where only students in special classes are exempted. Also, the range of difficulty of the tests could be extended, particularly at the lower end so that virtually all children can achieve some success.

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1.4 PROCEDURES FOR IMPROVING ITEM QUALITY

There are several procedures which can be used to identify items that are 'faulty'. In order for the test to have content validity, the items must fit the objective being measured. This was done by inspection. Unless one can say with confidence that the items in a competency test measure the intended objective, any interpretation of the test scores is questionable.

FACILITY

The facility of an item was a very important characteristic used in selecting items for the program. This is indicated by the proportion of students who got the item right.

EXAMPLE

If in a class of 20 students, the number who got an item right was 12, the facility of the item is given by:

$$\text{Facility} = \frac{\text{Number who got the item right}}{\text{Total number who attempted}}$$

$$= \frac{12}{20}$$

$$= 0.60$$

Facility can have a range of values from 1.00 where everyone got the item right to 0.00 where no one got the item right.

The facility or p-value was a useful indicator for analysis. In the CR test situation, high p-values could be expected if what was measured by the items had been taught well. A high or a low p-value did not mean a bad item. If the p-value was high or very low, the item was checked to see if it discriminated between mastery and non-mastery students.

A good way to use the facility value in a class situation is to obtain one before instruction and another after instruction. If, however the p-values were close, one may examine the instruction or the test items.

DISCRIMINATION

Another characteristic used in the analysis was the item's discrimination index. Since the aim of a CRT is to tell the teacher whether the student is competent or not on a particular objective, it was important to select items that discriminated between students who were competent (masters) and those who were not (non-masters).

An item discriminates if a higher proportion in the competent group (mastery group) got the item right compared with the proportion in the non-competent group (non-mastery group) who also got the item right. The competent group comprises students who have obtained 80% of the number of items correct where 80% has been defined as the competency level.

The discrimination index is given by:

$$\text{Discrimination Index} = \frac{\text{No of students in mastery group who got item right}}{\text{Total no of students in mastery group}} - \frac{\text{No of students in non-mastery group who got item right}}{\text{Total no of students in non-mastery group}}$$

EXAMPLE

In a class of 20 students, 14 students achieved the mastery level of 80% correct on a test. This means that

No of students in mastery group	=	14
No of students in non-mastery group	=	6

Suppose, on a particular item in the test the number of students in the mastery group who got the item right was 12, and the number in the non-mastery group who also got the item right was 2.

Then, the discrimination index is given by:

$$\text{Discrimination Index} = \frac{12}{14} - \frac{2}{6}$$

$$= 0.86 - 0.33$$

$$= 0.53$$

A discrimination index of 0.53 indicates a highly discriminating item. A low value such as 0.10 or less, or a negative value, is a warning flag.

When a seemingly poor item was located, one had to decide whether to alter or discard it. Other characteristics of CRTs were also examined, but these would take too much space to explain here. The panels involved in the development of the item pools for this program selected items that had certain characteristics that 'good' CRTs possess.

Appendix II

ADAPTED LEVELS OF USE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL STAFF

For Teachers

1. Are you currently using materials from the program? Here is a picture of the materials that have been produced. Which ones are you currently using.

(If the answer is no, ask if they know about the program and probe what they know.)

2. Please describe for me how you use the materials. (Probe their use of the three strategies - Item Pools, Moderation booklets, and Type C)

OR for Principals and Senior Teachers.

1. Is your school currently using materials from the Primary Assessment program?

2. Please describe for me how the materials are used.

3. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the program in your situation? (Probe for strengths and weakness in the three types of materials - Item Pools, Moderation, and Type C)

4. How did you find out about the Primary Assessment Program?

5. Do you meet with other to discuss the program? What sorts of things are talked about?

6. As you look ahead this year, what plans do you have in relation to your use of the primary assessment program?

7. Do you think the Education Department should try to establish system-wide standards?

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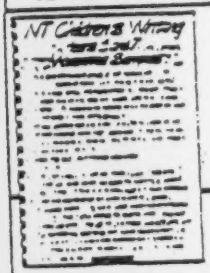
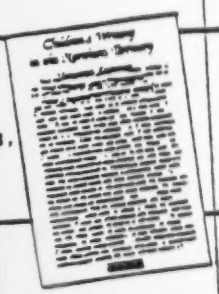
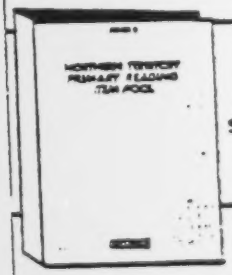
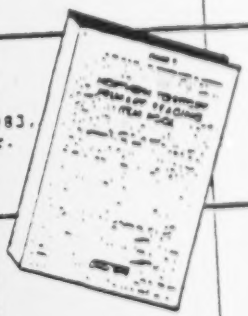
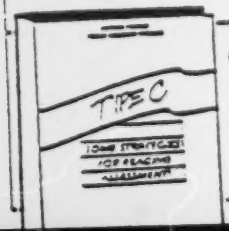
Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPALS/ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS AND SENIOR TEACHERS

QUESTION 1

The materials shown below have been sent to your school over the past four years. Have you seen these materials? Please answer Yes or No in the boxes provided. Please indicate by ticking (✓) the boxes those materials that have been used this year or have been used in the past. Please indicate using A, B, C, or D, what each of the materials is/was used for. (Note: they may have more than one use)

A - system-wide tests selected from the item pools
B - class tests or exercises selected from the item pools
C - assessing student writing
D - assessing other skills

MATERIALS	MATERIALS SEEN Yes/No	USED THIS YEAR (✓)	USED IN THE PAST (✓)	USED FOR A,B,C,D
 1. Booklet 1983, buff cover.				
 2. Booklet 1988, grey cover.				
3. Folder 1983, orange cover.				
4. Folder 1983, green cover.				
 5. Folder 1983, tan cover.				
 6. Folder 1983, tan cover.				
 7. Folder 1986, orange cover.				

QUESTION 2

The two basic aims of the Primary Assessment Program are:

to monitor standards of achievement in English and Mathematics in Northern Territory primary schools.

to provide teachers in the upper primary with materials for assessing the competency of students in English and Mathematics.

Do you consider that these aims are being met?

Aim 1

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Aim 2

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QUESTION 3

Please comment on how you use the Primary Assessment materials in your school and what value they are to the school?

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QUESTION 4

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the Primary Assessment Program?

Strengths.....

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Weaknesses.....

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QUESTION 5

How did you find out about the program?

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QUESTION 6

Do you meet with your staff to discuss the program? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what sorts of things are discussed?

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QUESTION 7

Do you think the assessment program is helping to improve academic standards across the Territory? ☐ Yes ☐ No Please comment.

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QUESTION 8

How do you feel about the program as a whole?

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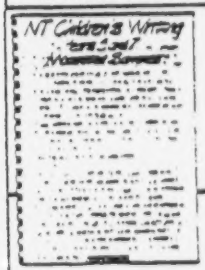
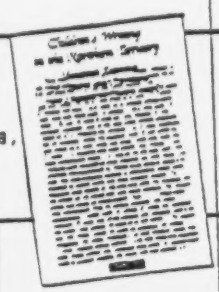
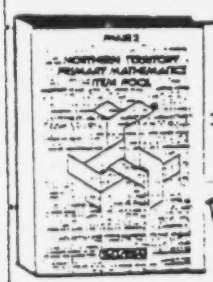
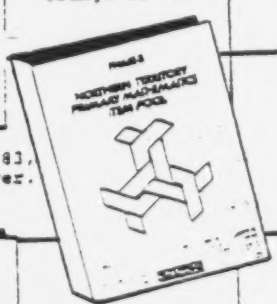
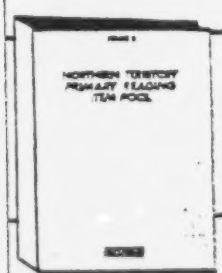
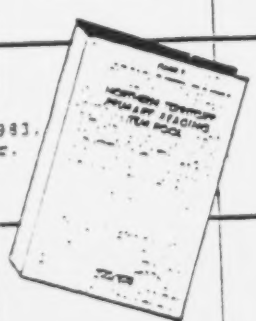
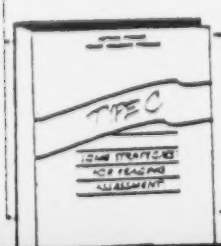
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF UPPER PRIMARY CLASSES - YEARS 5, 6 AND 7

QUESTION 1

Have you ever seen these materials? Please answer Yes or No in the boxes provided. Please indicate by ticking (✓) the boxes those materials you have used this year or have used in the past.

Please indicate using A, B, C, or D, what each of the materials is/was used for. (Note: they may have more than one use)

A - system-wide tests selected from the item pools
B - your own tests or class exercises selected from the item pools
C - assessing student writing
D - assessing other skills

MATERIALS	MATERIALS SEEN Yes/No	USED THIS YEAR (✓)	USED IN THE PAST (✓)	USED FOR A,B,C,D
 1. Booklet 1983, buff cover.				
 2. Booklet 1988, grey cover.				
 3. Folder 1983, orange cover.				
 4. Folder 1983, green cover.				
 5. Folder 1983, tan cover.				
 6. Folder 1983, tan cover.				
 7. Folder 1986, orange cover.				

QUESTION 2

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of:

The Mathematics and Reading Item Pools

Strengths.....

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Weaknesses.....

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The Writing Moderation Booklets

Strengths.....

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Weaknesses.....

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Type C - Strategies for Assessing Reading

Strengths.....

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Weaknesses.....

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QUESTION 3

How did you find out about the Primary Assessment Program?

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QUESTION 4

Do you meet with other staff to discuss the program? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what sorts of things are discussed?

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QUESTION 5

Do you think the assessment program is helping to improve academic standards across the Territory? ☐ Yes ☐ No Please comment.

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QUESTION 6

How do you feel about the program as a whole?

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QUESTION 7

Are you aware of the changes made to the program in 1988? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes please comment on the changes.

Mathematics.....

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Reading.....

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QUESTION 8

Have you seen the test results that have been sent to your school?
☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, in what ways do you use them?

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QUESTION 9

Have you read the reports on the results that have been issued each year? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please comment on their usefulness.

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QUESTION 10

What do you consider to be the most suitable time of the school year for administering the system-wide tests?

Mathematics.....

Reading.....

QUESTION 11

Any other comments? (e.g. on the materials, test administration etc.)

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QUESTION 12

Year level taught/position in school?

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QUESTION 1

The materials shown below have been sent to your school over the past three years. Have you seen these materials? Please answer Yes or No in the boxes provided. Please indicate by ticking (/) the boxes those materials that have been used this year or have been used in the past. Please indicate using A, B, C, or D, what each of the materials is/was used for. (Note: they may have more than one use)

A - system-wide tests selected from the item pools
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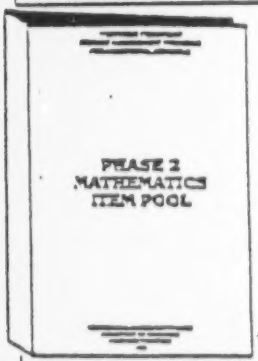
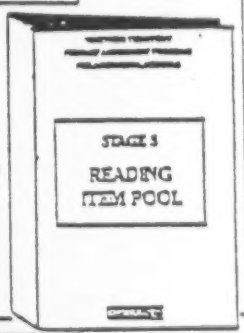
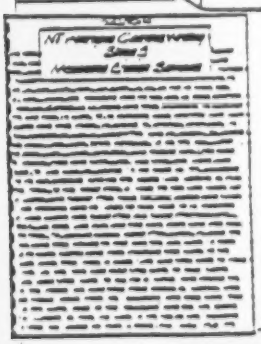
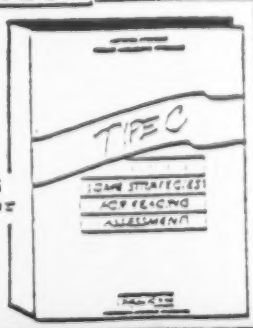
MATERIALS	MATERIALS SEEN Yes/No	USED THIS YEAR (✓)	USED IN THE PAST (✓)	USED FOR A.B.C.D
 Folder 1986 blue cover				
Folder 1986 yellow cover 				
 Booklet 1985 white cover				
Folder 1986 orange cover 				

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Strengths.....

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Any other comments? (e.g. on the materials, test administration etc.)

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QUESTION 10

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Please comment on the changes.

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QUESTION 11

Have you seen the test results that have been sent to your school?
☐ Yes ☐ No What use does the school make of the results?

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QUESTION 12

Have you read the reports on the results that have been issued each year? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please comment on their usefulness.

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QUESTION 13

What do you consider to be the most suitable time of the school year for administering the system-wide tests?

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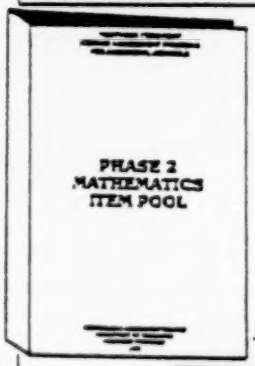
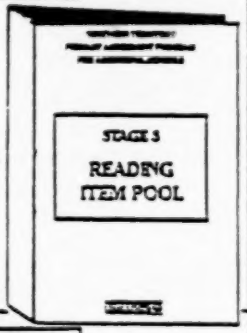
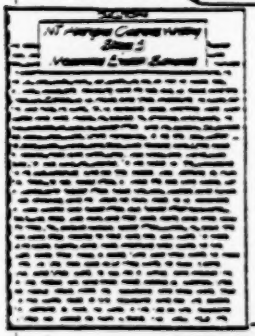
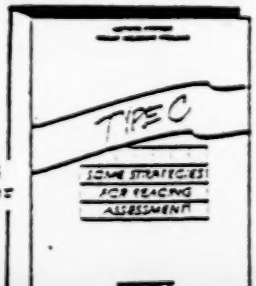
 Folder 1986 blue cover				
Folder 1986 yellow cover 				
 Booklet 1985 white cover				
Folder 1986 orange cover 				

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Weaknesses.....

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The Writing Moderation Booklets

Strengths.....

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Weaknesses.....

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Type C - Strategies for Assessing Reading

Strengths.....

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Weaknesses.....

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QUESTION 12

Year level taught/position in school?

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EVALUATION OF THE PRIMARY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

1988 Year 7 MATHEMATICS TEST.

Please comment in the spaces provided or on the reverse side of this sheet.

SCHOOL:

1. TEST ADMINISTRATION: (e.g. time allowed for the test, date of administration, test format ...)

2. TEST: (e.g. range and difficulty of items, relationship to the curriculum, relevance to current teaching practice ...)

3. FURTHER COMMENTS regarding this test and Primary Assessment Program in general: